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What Can Woman Do?

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INTRODUCTION.

What can woman do?—Not in a spirit of cavil at some of the extreme doctrines of the day are we about to answer this question. Nor do we purpose to meet the casuist and the moralist in grave discussion. Too often, in the latter field, counsel is darkened by words without knowledge, and the fine intuitions dimmed of even the purest minds. Not of woman's equality with man do we intend to speak; for on that subject, where common perception is at fault, reasonings are of little value, because they are based, for the most part, on wrong premises. Yet do we not disparage reasonings; for these, when enlightened, are the ministers of judgment.

Our purpose is to show, in a series of life-pictures, what woman can do, as well for good as for evil. We design to bring her before you as a living entity, that you may see her as she is, and comprehend in some small degree the influence she wields in the world's progress upward, as well as her power to mar the human soul and drag it down to perdition when her own spirit is darkened by evil passions.

A large proportion of the wrong woman suffers in the present constitution of society may be fairly set down as the fault of woman. Not so much to the women of this as of the preceding generation; for the men of the time are, *to a certain degree*, either what their mothers have made them or have,

through ignorance, error, or neglect, permitted them to become. And the wrongs that women may suffer in the next generation will, in a like measure, be chargeable to the women of this. The child is far more easily moulded to a woman's will than the man. On the yielding character of the former she may impress a good form, but she will find the task of changing the full-grown man a most difficult, if not an impossible, achievement. Many women can with sorrow attest the truth of this last remark.

How vitally important, then, is it that woman should justly regard her own relation to the world in which she lives, and should see how, in the very nature of things, her action upon it involves effects of the highest moment! We offer her, in the following sketches, the little aid it is in our power to give. The scenes presented may be classed as imaginary; but we have endeavored to keep so close a relation between the actual and the ideal that few will see them as any thing less or more than transcripts from nature. In entering the household, we have pictured the child-sister as well as the life-weary grandmother bending under her weight of years, and woman in many varied intervening relations; for in all of these relations she exercises an influence most potent and wide-extending.

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WHAT CAN WOMAN DO?

CHAPTER I.

THE CHILD-SISTERS—A CONTRAST.

Eyes brown as the hazel-nut, and so transparent that, when you gazed into them, you seemed to be looking down into her soul; chestnut hair, golden in the sunshine; brow white as a snow-flake, and lips and cheeks in hue like the fragrant apple-blossom. There she sits by the open window, through which the cool sweet air floats in from the garden, happy in her own innocence,—the loving child-sister! The kitten purs by her side, rubs himself against her plump little ankle, and then springs into her lap, sure of a gentle caress. The wren, whose fledglings are hidden away somewhere above the eaves, hops down beneath the window for crumbs, nor starts at her voice as the child bends forward to admire her soft coat and dainty legs. Happy innocent! As we picture thee in imagination, and think of thy sweet life, Memory turns a page written upon, and sealed for all time,—yea, for eternity,—written upon so many years gone by that we cannot name the cycle;

and we see the words, glowing in characters of light, To be good is to be happy.

We scarcely comprehended their meaning, when, in some old, tiresome spelling-book, or on soiled copy-slip, we first read these words of wisdom. In a certain sense they were cabalistic. Nor did their just value appear until the sunny days of childhood were long past, and the stern conflict with self had commenced. Then, in hours of despondency and discouragement, when it seemed as if the soul's enemies were about to achieve their triumph, rays of light suddenly broke in upon the darkness, and in letters of burning gold we read these heart-strengthening words, and realized something of their true significance.

Yes, happy innocent! now in the golden age of thy being, very near to thee are the angels, and around thee, like a protecting garment, is thrown their sphere of celestial love. Hidden away and quiescent in the unawakened depths of thy human soul lie those impulses to evil which, alas! all who are born of woman inherit. Blessed art thou in this,—that, in *thy* soul, they seem dead forms rather than sleeping vitalities! As yet they have not even moaned, nor turned in their deep slumber, nor given a sign of awakening. Yes; happy art thou in this, gentle child-sister, for, in most hearts, evil seeds spring quickly into eager life!

Day was declining; and the slanting sunbeams, which had stolen through the meshes of leaves in the old tree-tops and fallen in golden waves on the

chestnut hair of little Edie Penrose, as she sat by the open window, were now reflected back by the denser foliage, and the child was veiled in the cooling shadows of the great elms that spread their protecting arms above and around the dwelling. She had been almost an hour thus alone, yet scarcely conscious of the passage of time, when she suddenly started, as a low cry came faintly down from her mother's room, and then flitted away almost as lightly as a bird on the wing. There was only music in that cry for the ears of Edie, for it came from the lips of her baby-brother. How quickly the voice of grieving was hushed when the sister's love-lit face bent over the cradle! To the babe it was the face of an angel.

Up to this time, for hours, a deep tranquillity had reigned in the household, which seemed the very dwelling of peace and order. But now were heard below the loud banging of a door, sharp, almost angry, voices, and the confused sound of hurrying feet. Edie's two older brothers had returned from school, and, as it sometimes happened, in no amiable temper. A disagreement about some trifle on the way had soured their feelings toward each other, and they entered their home with anger in their hearts and taunting words upon their lips.

Edie, the moment she heard their voices, bent quickly over the cradle to kiss the babe. Then, gliding like a spirit from the room, she almost flew down-stairs, and was beside her brothers just as one of them raised his hand and exclaimed, fiercely,—

"I'll hit you if you say that again, Eddy!"

Eddy was about repeating the offensive word, when the light arm of his little sister glided around his neck, and the loving child said, in a voice that found its way to his heart,—

"Don't! don't, Eddy dear!"

"He's afraid!" was on the lips of George, the o der brother; but he repressed the taunt ere it leaped to utterance; for he likewise felt the gentler influence that always came with his sister's presence.

How instantly stilled was the tempest of passion, raging but now so fiercely in these young hearts,—stilled by the voice of love!

"Brother George." Edie had withdrawn her arm from the neck of Eddy, and now stood looking into the face of her elder brother. The boy turned himself partly away, as if to hide his countenance, yet marred by anger, from eyes that were reading its every expression.

"Brother George," (Edie repeated the words, but spoke in a changed voice and with a quickening nterest in her tones,) "I've been waiting for you o come home so long! Aunt Hetty brought me such a nice little book, full of pictures; and I want you to read me all about them. Won't you, now, Georgie?"

"Yes, indeed, I will," answered George, in a cheerful way. "Where is the book, Edie?"

"In the parlor. I'll get it for you in a minute;" and the child bounded away. In a few moments

she returned with the book, and the three children went out into the garden and seated themselves on a bench under the grape-vine arbor. Edie was in the centre, and George and Eddy on each side of her.

"I'll hold it just so, and then we can all see the pictures," said Edie, as she spread the book open on her lap. "Can't you read it if I hold it just so?" And Edie looked so lovingly into the face of George, that he could not answer any thing but "Yes," much as he felt inclined to get the book entirely into his own hands, and thus prevent Eddy from looking at the pictures while he read about them to his sister.

It so happened that the first story in the book was about a selfish boy, and the second about one who got angry and struck his brother, and the third about a good little sister who always tried to make peace between her brothers.

"I guess this book was written about us," said George, whose better feelings were now restored; "at least, about you and me, Edie. I'm the boy that gets angry, and you're the good sister. Here, Eddy," —and he drew a ball of red twine from his pocket,— "you may have the whole of it to keep. I'll get some more from Jonas to-morrow."

"I don't want but half of it," replied Eddy, touched by the generous change in his brother's feelings; (the dispute had been about this ball of twine:) "let me cut it in two."

"Take it all, Eddy," said George, kindly. "I

don't want a bit of it. Jonas will give me another ball."

"Thank you, brother," returned Eddy, in a grateful voice.

Thus all was reconciled ere the sun went down on their anger. And now the reading of the book was resumed by George. It lay upon the lap of Edie, who had drawn an arm around each of her brothers; and, as one little story after another entered their minds, their quick imaginations realizing every scene with lifelike distinctness, the waves of better feelings swept over the sands of life, obliterating every footprint of evil passion.

Not very distant from the dwelling of Mr. and Mrs. Penrose, the parents of these children, a scene very unlike the one we have just described occurred about the same time. Let us draw the picture.

A restless little girl, nearly the age of Edie Penrose, wearied with herself and all around her, resorted, at last, to one of her mother's drawers which she found unlocked, and commenced rummaging among its secret treasures. While engaged in this forbidden employment, she was disconcerted by the entrance of her mother, who, filled with sudden anger at the child, jerked her away from the drawer, and, with sharp words and blows, punished her for this misconduct. But the punishment administered thus intemperately had no salutary effect. The offender was angry, not penitent. With her young face marred by bad passions,

she left the room. On her way down-stairs she saw the kitten quietly asleep upon the landing. The sight affected her with no gentle feelings, but rather increased her ill-humor; for, stooping down, she caught it up rudely and threw it over the baluster into the passage below. The kitten cried with pain for a few moments, and then ran off and hid itself under one of the sofas in the parlor. Hearing the noise and cry, the cook called out,—

"Who did that? Was it you, Kate?" But the sulky child made no answer.

"If I was your mother I'd whip you well, you bad, cruel girl!" said the cook. "To hurt a kitten in that way!"

"Well, you a'n't my mother; and I'll hurt the kitten whenever I please. Why don't it stay down-stairs?"

This was the child's reply to the cook's rebuke.

"I wish you'd go up into the nursery; I don't want bad girls down here," said the latter.

"I'll stay just as long as I please. It isn't your house!" retorted Kate.

Cook said no more, for she knew, from experience, that it would do no good. The little girl lingered in the kitchen for some time, more for the purpose of showing cook that she would stay there just as long as she pleased than because she found any thing particularly attractive. She was about returning to the nursery, when her ears caught the sound of voices in the street, and, running to the door, she met her two older brothers, William and

Jacob, in warm debate on some subject about which they had disagreed. It so happened that William and Kate had quarrelled at dinner-time, and that Kate, being in the mother's view most to blame, had been required to submit. This she had done with a very bad grace. All the afternoon she had nursed her anger against William, and now the sight of him fanned it into a new flame. Seeing that there was some trouble between him and Jacob, she did not hesitate a moment in her decision as to who was in the wrong, but, catching the latter by the arm, she said, in an excited voice,—

"What's the matter? What has he done to you?"

"Why, he says Mrs. Brown's cow has three white spots on her forehead, and I say she hasn't but two."

"Three spots!" exclaimed Kate, in a tone of contempt. "She hasn't but two. William can't see."

"I can see as well as you, miss, and a great deal better!" retorted William. "Anyhow, you've got nothing to do in the matter. I wish you'd mind your own business."

Kate made a face at her brother, and then, catching Jacob by the arm, said, as she pulled him into the passage,—

"Come! I've got something good up in my baby-house. William sha'n't have a bit of it. He's a mean fellow anyhow."

Jacob, whose anger against his brother would have passed away in a few moments but for this in-

terference on the part of his sister, yielded to the tempting invitation, and, turning away from William, followed Kate, who ran lightly before him along the passage and up the stairway.

"I ll have some of it, I know!" exclaimed William, following quickly.

"Go back! Go back! You sha'n't look into my baby-house, you ugly, mean fellow!" cried Kate, pausing on one of the landings and shaking her hand at William.

"We'll see!" was the boy's resolute response, as he pressed forward.

"Go back!" Louder and more passionate was the voice of the angry child.

"You sha'n't come near the baby-house!" said Jacob, standing before William, to prevent his going any farther.

"I'll go just where I please," retorted the boy, throwing himself against his brother as he spoke, and almost knocking him down.

A blow from the suddenly-clenched fist of Jacob, given with much force in the blind excitement of the moment, was followed by a gush of blood from the boy's nose. A wild cry of pain rang through the house, bringing the mother and domestics to the scene of trouble.

"What's the matter? Who did this?" the mother asked, in an excited voice.

"Jacob hit me with his fist! Oh, dear! Oh! Oh! Oh, dear!" And he cried louder from passion than from pain.

"You bad, wicked boy!" exclaimed the mother, waiting for no further explanations. And then she struck Jacob three or four severe blows on the side of his head.

"Katy told him to strike me," cried William, a feeling of gratified revenge in his heart at the punishment of Jacob.

"I didn't! I didn't! You know I didn't! It's all a lie!"

"How dare you?" ejaculated the mother, now turning upon Kate and boxing her ears soundly.

This summary visitation, the result of a false accusation on the part of William, only made stronger Kate's angry feelings toward her brother.

"He did tell a lie, and he knows it! I never said a word to Jacob about striking him."

"Hush, this instant!" And Katy's mother raised her hand again.

Fear of punishment kept the child silent. It took some time to restore order.

After William's face was bathed and the blood stanched, their mother tried to investigate the cause of trouble; but there was so much of accusation and denial on all sides that she sought in vain for the true solution, and cut the knot by subjecting all three to additional punishment.

The day went down in tears for these young hearts, in which were germs of good as well as evil. But, unhappily, evil seeds found the quickest vitality, and weeds grew where fragrant blossoms should have opened to the morning sunshine.

CHAPTER II.

THE TWO HOMES.

In this brief introduction we have presented glimpses of two families,—the first, that of a physician, named Penrose, living in the rural town of Arden, and the other, that of a lawyer and politician, named Eldridge, residing in the same place. As we have no very interesting particulars to relate touching the past histories of these families, we shall not occupy time in retrospection, but trace their ways in life onward from the period in which they are first brought to the reader's notice. The contrast between the child-sisters is strongly enough marked. Just such children are all around us, doing their work of good or evil, and beautifying or marring the young spirits with which they meet in daily intercourse. Happy the brothers who have among them a minister of love like Edie Penrose!

The mother of Edie was a wise, true-hearted woman, who loved her children unselfishly. She was quiet in exterior, but thoughtful and earnest in all her purposes. Mere impulse she steadily repressed, and ever refused to act until all sudden turbulence of feeling had subsided and clearness of vision made every thing plain before her. Among her children she maintained, if there was any thing wrong in their conduct, an unimpassioned exterior,

for she knew the power of a calm word and tone over the spirit of another. With the exception of Edie, they were very much like other children, having their selfish impulses and times of fretfulness, irritability, and ill-nature. To meet these with a soothing calmness, and a wise sifting of all cases of difficulty among them, until the cause of disagreement was ascertained, she knew to be far better than to visit them in their states of mental disorder with hard words of reproof, or to exhibit any sign of mental disturbance. And so it came that the children of Mrs. Penrose, from the earliest dawn of reason, looked to her as their loving friend. If they had trouble among themselves, they were sure to find in her an impartial umpire. If they had committed faults, no harsh reproof or unjust censure awaited them. If, from any cause, fretfulness and impatience disturbed their young spirits, they were met by no fretfulness and impatience in return.

But it was not so in the home of Mrs. Eldridge's children. There disorder and strife reigned, punishments were meted in anger, all the heart's gentler feelings repressed, hate engendered, and love crushed out of young and tender spirits.

How different was it in these two families when evening closed around them! There were in both elements of unhappiness, as we have seen; but unselfish love in one household had power to make all bright and cheerful, while in the other every home-light burned dim.

Dr. Penrose was not naturally a man of cheerful

temper. Oppression and suffering in childhood had sobered his feelings, and early disappointments taken from him that eager hope which is the element of some men's success in life. He was sensitive to a fault,—easily disturbed by any thing that interposed between him and the realization of his purposes, and too quick, at times, to give utterance to his feelings when disturbed.

At the close of the day on which our story begins, Dr. Penrose came home, after a weary round of visits, and with one or two cases of dangerous illness resting with a troubled weight upon his mind. He entered the house with his usual quiet step, and, after going into his office to see if any new calls awaited him, passed on to the pleasant family sitting-room. Little Edie was there, and the sight of her was as a sunbeam on his path. As he seated himself in the great arm-chair, the child climbed upon his lap, and, twining her arms about his neck, kissed him again and again.

"Do you love father?" The doctor asked the question almost mechanically, for his thoughts were absent.

"Oh, yes! I love you and mother better than all the world!" returned the little one, in a voice so full of affection that the words found an echo in his heart and produced an unwonted thrill of delight. Again his neck was clasped with an eager pressure.

"What have you been doing all day, love?" inquired the father, as he returned the caress of Edie

"Playing," was the answer.

"Do you play all the time?"

"Oh, no! Sometimes I rock the cradle, and sometimes I hold the baby."

"Do you, indeed?"

"Oh, yes! And I can sew, too. I hemmed a white pocket-handkerchief for you this afternoon.'

"Did you? Why, you are a smart little girl! I must give you another kiss for that."

"And mother said it was done so nice," continued the happy child.

Gradually the cheerful, loving spirit of little Edie scattered the dim shadows which had gathered around the spirit of Dr. Penrose; and, when his wife joined him in the sitting-room, his face was all aglow with smiles. Only a few words, however, had passed between them, ere a cry of anger from an adjoining apartment, followed by voices in contention, scattered these smiles, and the doctor exclaimed fretfully,—

"Oh, dear! those two boys worry me to death! They're always quarrelling about something."

As Dr. Penrose said this, Edie slid down from his lap, and was out of the room in a moment. Th doctor was about rising to go and settle the dispute when his wife laid her hand on his arm, and said,—

"Wait a moment." And then she stood in a listening attitude. "Edie will make all right between them."

And so it proved. Scarcely had she entered the room from which had come sounds of discord, ere the strife ceased.

"What a magic there is about that child!" remarked the doctor.

"It is the magic of love," said Mrs. Penrose "Every one feels it."

The parents waited for some minutes for Edie to return; but the little sister, after restoring harmony between her brothers, remained with them, entering into their pleasures and softening their intercourse.

"I saw a very different sight from this just now, as I came home," said Dr. Penrose. "Little Katy Eldridge is far from being like our Edie."

"Very far, indeed! The child, it seems to me, is possessed at times of an evil spirit."

"You would have believed so if you had seen her, as I did, a little while ago, snatch a ripe pear from the hand of her brother William, and, after biting off a large piece, throw the pear at Jacob, calling to him at the same time to run away with it. Jacob, thus incited to an act of selfish injustice, caught the pear and ran off, crowding it greedily into his mouth at every step. William, maddened by this outrage, took up a large stone and flung it with all his might at Jacob. I stopped and held my breath; for, if the stone had struck the boy, it could not have failed to hurt him seriously. Fortunately, the aim was not well taken, and the stone passed on through the air harmless. At this moment I turned and saw Mr. Eldridge near by: he had also witnessed the scene. There was a look of pain on his fine countenance, as he hurried past me with only a nod of recognition and entered the house, followed

by the children, to whom he had called in a low but stern voice."

"What a home-reception for a father," remarked Mrs. Penrose, "after a day of care and labor!"

"From some cause," said Mr. Penrose, "Mr. Eldridge is changing. He used to be one of the most buoyant-spirited men in Arden; but he is flagging of late. It can't be on account of his business, for he has the best practice of any lawyer at our bar, and is rapidly accumulating property."

"I'm afraid," Mrs. Penrose replied, "judging from what I see occasionally, that his home-life is by no means as pleasant as it should be. Mrs. Eldridge is a woman of very uncertain temper, conducts her housekeeping in a way to secure but little order or comfort, and quarrels with her children instead of guiding, leading, and controlling them. It really chilled me to hear her speak to Katy the other day. 'You little torment!' she exclaimed, as the child overturned her work-basket. And then she caught her passionately by the arm and thrust her from the room, saying, as she did so, 'Go off to the kitchen, and don't let me see your face again to-day!' Katy went away, screaming to the full capacity of her lungs. As soon as her voice, from distance, ceased to ring in our ears with deafening power, Mrs. Eldridge said, 'Oh, dear! that child worries the life out of me! I never saw such a pest. She's into every thing and interfering with everybody. She'll be the death of me yet! Such a meddlesome, quarrelsome little wretch was never before born!'"

"Why, she don't deserve to have children!" said the doctor, warmly.

"I doubt if she appreciates the blessing," remarked his wife. "'Troublesome comforts' they are, in her estimation."

"A kind of necessary evil, as I once heard a woman of her class remark."

"Yes. But if she would only meet the evil, if such she regards it, with a measure of wise forbearance, there would be some merit in the case. As it is, few if any ameliorating features are presented."

"It is well for me, Lucy," said the doctor, turning a kind glance upon his wife, "that the genius of my home wears a gentler aspect. I should be driven away in despair if the atmosphere were never sunny and the sky never free from clouds."

The children entered at this moment, in gay spirits, Eddy and George bearing their sister between them, sitting on their clasped hands, while her arms were around their necks. It was a picture of love, the vision of which warmed and gladdened the parents' hearts. A little while they bore her around the room in a kind of triumphal march, and then passed out, leaving a blessing behind them.

"Dear child! She has in her less of earth than heaven," said Mrs. Penrose. "I often tremble when I look at her, lest she fade from my sight like a vision of beauty."

The doctor sighed. The same thought had often flitted through his own mind, and it always troubled him.

"We could not spare her from our household," said he. "Oh, no! no! Were it not for her, our two boys, both so quick-tempered, would never harmonize. What a blessed influence she has over them! How quickly, in the sunshine of her presence, their stormy passions are subdued. Happy are we in such a child!"

Mr. Eldridge, who had seen the act of Katy when she snatched the pear from her brother, was greatly incensed against her as the instrument of discord between her brothers, whose aptness to disagree was to him a source of much anxiety. Catching her by the arm as he entered the house, he lifted her from the floor and carried her to the sitting-room, where his wife was trying to finish the last few pages of a book which had occupied most of her time during the day.

"Look here, Harriet!" said he, with unusual excitement of manner; "if you don't do something with this girl, I shall have to send her off where she can find nobody to quarrel with. The way she conducts herself is terrible!"

"What is the matter now, Mr. Eldridge?" returned his wife, disturbed in her pleasant occupation of reading, and brought down with a heavy jar to an uncongenial actuality.

"What is always the matter? Kate has been making trouble between the boys again. I never saw such a child!"

"What has she done, Mr. Eldridge?" The mother of Kate spoke in a fretful, querulous voice.

"Making trouble between her brothers, as I have just said," was replied. "I don't believe the boys would disagree half as often as they do if she would let them alone."

Without gaining any clearer comprehension of the matter than was afforded by this general charge against the young culprit, Mrs. Eldridge, in a fever of passion, sprang toward Katy, and inflicted upon her a dozen severe blows on the back and about the head. The child, as soon as she could escape from her mother's hands, fled screaming from the room.

"That kind of work does more harm than good," said Mr. Eldridge.

"What kind of work, pray?" A crimson tide had rushed to the face of Mrs. Eldridge.

"Punishment inflicted in anger always does harm."

"Then you are even more to blame than I am," said Mrs. Eldridge, sharply; "for you dragged the child here in a towering passion, charging her vaguely with some monstrous crime and requiring punishment at my hands. Next time, if you see any thing wrong, make your own corrections."

Mr. Eldridge had no taste for domestic conflicts, and always retired from strife the moment a sign of war appeared. On the present occasion he felt no inclination to act differently. Without offering a word in reply, he turned away from his excited companion and retired to his office. He had not been there long before the jar of discordant voices reached his ears. His two sons were at strife again. In

scarcely a better state of mind than his wife for meeting a trouble of this character, Mr. Eldridge hurried into the garden, from which came the angry words. Jacob and William were disputing about a knife. Ere the father reached the scene of contention, Katy was on the ground, and had taken the side of Jacob.

"It's Jacob's knife! I know it is! Give Jacob his knife!" she was exclaiming.

"It isn't Jacob's knife! It's mine!" replied William.

"I know better! It's Jacob's knife! Give it to him, this minute!" And the little girl was already struggling with William for possession of the knife, that she might give it to her elder brother.

"Kate!" Her father's stern voice startled the child, and she retreated a few paces.

"Go into the house."

Katy looked frightened, and obeyed instantly.

"Have you got Jacob's knife?" now inquired Mr. Eldridge, assuming a calmness that he did not feel He spoke to William.

"No, sir. It's my own knife," was firmly answered.

"I think it's my knife," said Jacob.

"You think!" Mr. Eldridge frowned.

"If he'll just let me look at it, I can tell in a minute."

"I told him it wasn't his knife," spoke up William; "but he wouldn't believe me. I know my own knife."

"But why didn't you let him look at it? All this trouble would then have been avoided."

"Because I was afraid he would snatch it out of my hand."

"Ah, boys! boys!" said Mr. Eldridge, "this is a sad state of things! Let me see the knife, William."

William handed the knife to his father, who reached it toward Jacob, with the inquiry,—

"Does that belong to you?"

Jacob examined the knife for a moment, and then answered,—

"No, sir; it isn't mine. But I thought it was."

"Only *thought* it was, yet claimed it for your own, and quarrelled with your brother because he would not relinquish to you what was really his own! Jacob, conduct like this deserves punishment, and more particularly so, coming as it does upon your recent outrage upon William in taking the pear."

"Katy gave me the pear," said Jacob, in feeble justification of his conduct. "If she hadn't taken it from William, I—I——"

He stammered, and broke down in his speech.

"Your fault in that instance is not to be excused on any plea," said Mr. Eldridge. "I regard you as most to blame; for you are the oldest, and should have reproved Katy for her wrong-doing instead of becoming a party thereto."

A look of triumph lit up the countenance of William. Mr. Eldridge saw this and his own error at the same time; for, in reproving Jacob in the presence of William, he had widened the breach be-

tween them, instead of reconciling them to each other.

For some moments he stood in silent perplexity, not knowing what it was best to say or do.

"Let me hear no more of this wrangling," he at length remarked, partly turning away as he spoke. "If you cannot live like brothers, you will have to be separated."

Mr. Eldridge walked back into the house, and sat down in his office, in a fretted state of mind. He was a lover of quiet, harmony, and order; but, as the years progressed, he seemed to recede further and further from his ideal of home-felicity. Government in the family, truly so, there was none; and, if he attempted to rule matters independent of his wife, affairs were made worse instead of better. With painful solicitude he had seen the growing spirit of discord among his children, and particularly the evil influence which Katy exercised over her brothers. He had tried in various ways to correct this very bad fault, but with no apparent success. Punishment, so far as Katy was concerned, he had left with his wife; but she only punished in anger, and no good results followed. Sometimes he ventured to suggest a change in the manner of his wife's home-administration; but whenever he did this her sensitive pride was aroused, and he was glad to take refuge in silence under the storm of words that most surely followed.

CHAPTER III.

STRIFE.

With the exception of a few captious or ill natured words among themselves, no further wrangling between the children of Mr. Eldridge took place during the evening. The tea-table was, as usual, a scene of disorder,—William, Jacob, and Katy acting more like hungry animals than well-bred human beings. Mrs. Eldridge scolded and threatened, and Mr. Eldridge spoke sharply several times, but with only temporary effect. The Babel of voices was hushed for a brief season, and then went on again with an increased confusion of tongues. In the midst of this annoying discord Mr. Eldridge pushed his chair back from the table saying fretfully, as he did so,—

"I can't stand this any longer! I'd rather go without my meals than eat them in such a bedlam of a place!"

And he left the room in anger.

Mrs. Eldridge, startled by this unexpected movement on the part of her husband, poured out upon the heads of her half-frightened children sundry vials of wrath, and ended by ordering them all off to bed. She was angry, and in earnest, and the reluctant young rebels were not able to escape this punishment; though, in submitting to it, they failed

not to show the largest permissible degree of opposition and give every kind of trouble within their power, short of provoking chastisement.

Mr. Eldridge had retired to his office, where, for nearly an hour, he sat brooding over the unhappy condition of affairs at home, and trying to work out some scheme of amelioration. Past experience gave him little hope. No change in home-government could take place without the earnest and cheerful co-operation of his wife; and heretofore, whenever he had made an effort to converse with her on the subject, she had misunderstood him, and imagined that he was blaming her, when he was only trying to lift her thoughts upward into a clearer perception of duty.

"I am almost discouraged," he murmured, as he started from his chair and commenced pacing the floor. "Things are getting worse, instead of better. All progression is in the wrong direction, and I shudder when I look to the end. Oh! if Harriet could only see as I do! If she would only work as earnestly in her sphere of duty as I have to work in mine! If she would only take counsel with me!"

At last, the whole subject having acquired, through earnest thought thereon, a new importance in his mind, Mr. Eldridge resolved to have a serious talk with his wife about their home-relations, and endeavor to effect, if possible, some change for the better. So, calming down his feelings, and assuming as cheerful an aspect as possible, he went to the sitting-room, where he found her reading. She looked at him for a moment over the top of

her book, and then bent her eyes again upon the page before her. There was little of promise in the expression of her countenance as she glanced at her husband.

Mr. Eldridge sat down near the lamp, and, taking up a magazine that lay upon the table, opened it, and pretended to read. But not a thought was stirred in his mind by any words that were printed upon the page. At last, speaking with a hesitation of manner and a huskiness of voice that betrayed a great deal more of feeling than he wished to exhibit, he said,—

"These children trouble me a great deal, Harriet."

Mrs. Eldridge let her book fall into her lap, and fixed her eyes upon her husband's countenance. There was a slight contraction of her brows, as if she felt the approach of something unpleasant.

"They grow worse instead of better," continued Mr. Eldridge. "But this ought not to be, and shows that something is wrong in our management. We ought to be able to repress the evil in them and bring out what is good. Don't you think so?"

Mr. Eldridge softened his voice, with the hope of soothing any disturbance of feeling which his introduction of the subject might occasion.

"I don't know any thing about it," replied Mrs. Eldridge, with singular perverseness; and then, raising the book, she fixed her eyes upon it, as if she were too much interested therein to care about any other subject.

"Harriet," (the voice of Mr. Eldridge became firm at once,) "this is trifling in a matter of solemn import. For once meet me in sober conference, and let us try and help one another to a clearer perception of duty."

"*For once!* Humph! You are complimentary, Mr. Eldridge!" The lips of Mrs. Eldridge slightly curled.

"For heaven's sake, Harriet," said Mr. Eldridge, "don't talk in this way, when I ask to converse with you on a subject of vital import. Our own and the happiness of our children are at stake. Surely, this is enough to render us grave and thoughtful!"

"I'm all attention. Say on." With something cold, almost haughty, in her manner, Mrs. Eldridge closed the book she was reading, and, leaning back in her chair, looked fixedly at her husband.

"Will you talk with me calmly on the subject of our children, Harriet?" asked her husband.

"Certainly—certainly! Say on." But there was nothing of kindness, or even modified feeling, in her tones.

"We ought to find some means of repressing their evil tempers," said Mr. Eldridge. "They wrangle together, it seems to me, all the time. It is dreadful to think of brothers and sisters growing up at variance with one another."

"I'm sure I've done all that I can do," replied Mrs. Eldridge. "And I'm certain that it doesn't worry you any more than it does me!"

"Couldn't you watch Katy a little more closely? I think she makes half the trouble between the boys."

"Oh! you needn't throw all the blame on Katy!" said Mrs. Eldridge. "I guess the others are about as bad. The fact of the business is, Mr. Eldridge, you magnify every thing that child does, until it looks ten times as large as it really is. I don't near you speak a kind word to her, week in and week out. That is no way to treat a child of her age. If you don't try to awaken gentle feelings in her, how can you expect them to exist?"

Mr. Eldridge bowed his head, and remained silent for several minutes. He felt the case to be hopeless. Either he had approached his wife on the subject in a wrong way, or she was incorrigibly perverse. While he yet brooded over the subject, Mrs. Eldridge said,—

"Of course, I'm to blame for every thing that goes wrong, as if the children were not as much yours as mine, and as if you were not as fully responsible as I am for their conduct. The fact of the business is, Mr. Eldridge, you don't pay any attention to them, but go out and come in for days without even speaking to them, except to find some fault, half of your time looking as sour as vinegar. Go to work yourself to get things right, and don't expect impossibilities of me!"

The lines which had gathered on the brows of Mr. Eldridge grew deeper, and the veins swelled into visible cords. He felt the case to be hopeless.

"Say no more, if you please, Harriet," he remarked, with forced calmness. "We will change the subject."

"Oh, yes!" retorted his wife, in a taunting voice; "when the shoe begins to pinch your own foot you are very ready to cast it off. Do your own duty to the children, and you will not see so much to find fault with in my conduct!"

"I found no fault with you, Harriet," said Mr. Eldridge, still repressing his feelings.

"You didn't, indeed?"

"I only asked to talk over with you the state of our home-affairs, with a view to some salutary change."

"Didn't you commence by blaming me for not taking the side of the boys against Katy?"

"No. All I said about her was to inquire if you couldn't watch her a little more closely and prevent her from stirring up strife so often between William and Jacob."

"Oh, yes! she's to bear the brunt of every thing, of course!" Wounded pride had obscured all the true perceptions of Mrs. Eldridge's mind. "And so it has been from the beginning. She never does any thing right in your eyes. But I can just tell you, Mr. Eldridge, that Katy is quite as good as the boys are."

Mr. Eldridge was a man of even temper and a great deal of self-control. Reason and inclination, as well as professional experience, had made him averse to contention, as usually resulting in greater

loss than gain Now he felt a strong impulse to retort with vehemence and asperity; and sharp words trembled on his lips for utterance. But, with an effort, he so far calmed the agitation he felt as to hide it from view, bridling his restive tongue and sealing his lips.

A short time Mrs Eldridge sat awaiting some further remark from her husband; but, as he showed no disposition to continue the conversation, she lifted her book before her face, and resumed the occupation which his entrance had suspended.

Troubled, fretted, and unhappy, Mr. Eldridge remained in the room for only a short period, and then went out. His wife dropped her book in her lap, as he left the apartment, and listened with a new manifestation of interest to the sound of his retreating feet. From the sitting-room he went to his office. There he could be heard moving about for several minutes, and then all was silent. Mrs. Eldridge had raised her book from her lap, and was running her eyes over the open page, when the shutting of the office-door caused her to look up again and listen. A shade of anxiety was visible on her countenance. Mr. Eldridge moved along the passage and went out by the street door. A sigh quivered the lips of his wife, and for many minutes she sat in statue-like stillness. Another and deeper sigh marked the breaking of her reverie, when the reading of her book was resumed

But all interest in its pages was gone. In vain she tried to lose herself in the history of another life. Self-consciousness was attended with too much suffering for this.

CHAPTER IV.

A GOSSIPING NEIGHBOR.

Mrs Eldridge's mind was still in a confused state, when the bell announced a visitor. She listened, while the servant passed to the door, with a feeling of expectation.

"Is Mrs. Eldridge at home?" It was a clear, familiar, ringing voice, the tones of which fell pleasantly on the lady's ears. Light feet tripped along the passage; the door of the room was swung open, and the visitor entered.

"Oh, my dear Mrs. Weakly! Good-evening! How glad I am to see you!"

"Good-evening! good-evening!" returned the lady, her face glowing with smiles, as she caught the extended hand of Mrs. Eldridge and saluted her with a kiss.

"I'm glad you've dropped in," said the latter; "for I feel too dull to be alone."

"Dull?" Mrs. Weakly looked earnestly into the face of her friend "What is there to make *you* feel dull?"

"A thousand things," was replied.

"Ah, my friend, you must learn to take the world easy, as I do."

"You are never dull?"

"Never!"

"Then you are a fortunate woman, and must have a husband of easier temper than I am blessed with."

"Oho! It's the husband, is it, my pretty little friend?" said Mrs. Weakly, in an airy tone. "That will never do. These husbands are terribly exacting and unreasonable sometimes; but most of them are susceptible of management. A few are incorrigible tyrants; but a woman of spirit knows how to deal with such. Your lord and master, however, does not belong to this latter class?"

"Oh, no. Mr. Eldridge is not a domestic tyrant. If he were, he'd not find the task of lording it over me an easy one. The trouble is, he expects me to make home a kind of paradise, and a parcel of unregenerate cubs of children as gentle and harmonious as lambs."

"Oh, dear!" And Mrs. Weakly laughed a merry ittle laugh, that seemed to come from away down in her throat.

"But I'm thinking they're no worse than we were when of their ages. I know that I was a torn-down little imp—at least they say so; and I rather think I'm not so very much behind other people at my time of life."

"No, I shouldn't think you were," said Mrs.

Weakly, in a voice that, to some ears, would have sounded not a little equivocal, though Mrs. Eldridge perceived in it only a compliment. "As for Weakly," continued the visitor, referring now to her own husband, "he and I have no disagreements. Things did go on a little rough at first, but I soon made him understand that I knew my position and should maintain it at all hazards. Ha! ha!"—the little laugh, away down in her throat, came with a new sound to the ears of Mrs. Eldridge,—"ha! ha! I can remember, as if it were but yesterday, our first quarrel: I call it a quarrel. We had been married then only three weeks. Weakly was very loving, very fussy, and very busy in our new home,—giving orders here and there, as if I were a mere slip of a girl, that didn't know a broom-handle from a frying-pan. Well, I looked on, half amused and half angry, waiting to see how far he would go. From the beginning he had undertaken to do the marketing, and he delivered his basket and his orders to the cook with as much coolness as if I were in the moon instead of in the house.

"Well, one day Weakly brought in a pair of chickens, and said, as he handed them to the cook,—

"'Now, Jane, we'll have a fricassée of these; and here are a few nice pippins in the basket. I got them for apple-dumplings. Don't forget them; and see here, Jane; let them be made with potato-crust.'

"'That will do,' said I to myself, as I turned off and went up-stairs, vexed half to crying at this treatment of me, as if I were nobody,—"that will do,

Mr. John Weakly; but if you see any fricasséed chicken or apple-dumpling with potato-crust to-day, my name isn't Martha Mary!'

"So, about an hour after he had left the house, I called down to Jane. She came up-stairs, and I said,—

"'Jane, isn't there enough of that meat we had yesterday, left over, to make out a dinner to-day?"

"'Mr. Weakly said we were to have fricasséed-chicken,' replied Jane, looking at me with surprise.

"'Did you understand what I said?' I spoke with some sternness of manner, and with a glance and tone that seemed to frighten the girl.

"'Ye—yes, ma'am,' she stammered.

"'Very well: answer me, then. Is there enough cold meat left over for dinner to-day?'

"'Yes, ma'am.'

"'Then chop it up fine, and make a hash of it. Do you know how to make a good hash?'

"The girl said she could try, and left the room with a bewildered air. In a little while she came back, and, looking at me doubtingly, said,—

"'About the apple-dumplings, ma'am; shall I make them?'

"'No,' I replied. 'You needn't make any apple-dumplings to-day. A rice-pudding will answer. Have you eggs and milk?' Jane said she had both, and I dismissed her with my finality.

"Well, I didn't feel altogether comfortable, as you may suppose; only three weeks a bride, and setting up in direct opposition to the will of my

husband. But I was always a girl of spirit, and, when once fairly aroused, never yielded. Weakly was in the wrong; that was clear: and I meant to keep him in the wrong. He had made the mistake of taking it for granted that I was a quiet little puss, who would yield to him in every thing and let him do about as he pleased. The longer he remained in this error, the more he would confirm himself in it; and so, all things considered, I was sure that my course was right.

"It must be owned that I felt a little nervous as dinner-time approached. I tried my best to summon before me an image of his true personality, in order to determine what amount of combative power he possessed, and to form therefrom some idea of the length of the contest about to begin. But I could determine nothing satisfactorily.

"At last my husband arrived, and I met him with my usual smiles, though my manner had in it a constraint that it was impossible to subdue. Soon after he came in, the dinner-bell rung, and we repaired to the breakfast-room together.

"'How's this?' he exclaimed, with a contracting brow, as he lifted the cover from a dish of smoking hash. 'Where are those chickens?'

"'We had meat enough over from yesterday, and so I told Jane not to cook them,' I replied, as evenly as I could speak.

"'But I distinctly told her to make a fricassée,' said my husband, contracting his brows still further,

and looking at me in a way that I did not regard as particularly amiable.

"'And I distinctly told her to hash up the cold meat from yesterday!' I replied, calmly, but in so resolute a voice that my husband fairly started at the words.

"'You knew I wanted the chickens,' he said, after a little pause.

"'You did not tell me so,' was my prompt answer.

"'You were standing by when I told Jane to cook them,' said he.

"'*Perhaps*,' I replied, 'if you had signified your wishes to me, instead of to my cook, they would have been complied with.'

"I think some light broke into the good man's mind, and with a suddenness that partially blinded him. He looked at me very earnestly for the space of half a minute, and then, without a word more, helped me to some of the hash, and went to eating his own dinner. Neither of us, it must be confessed, partook with an over-keen relish. When the dessert of rice-pudding came on, instead of the apple-dumplings with potato-crust, not a word was said. Weakly ate about half of what I gave him, and then, pushing back his chair, left the table. He was rather sober for a week, but never again ventured to give cook an order about dinner or any thing else. Sober for a week! I might say for a month: indeed, I think he's never got over being ashamed of himself to this day. I lost a good share of petting, and that kind of loving nonsense, no doubt, but succeeded

in making Weakly understand clearly the stuff that was in his wife. He's never trespassed on my ground since, and so we get on as smoothly as Darby and Joan."

Mrs. Weakly laughed merrily as she concluded, adding, as she did so,—

"There's nothing like a fair understanding at the beginning of all copartnerships. It prevents a deal of trouble afterward."

"Not many husbands would have submitted so easily," said Mrs. Eldridge.

"I don't know. Men are pretty hard subjects in the main; but a resolute woman is, nine cases in ten, a match for the hardest. We have a stronger self-will and more endurance, and, therefore, can hold out longer. A man, after a certain period of opposition, grows weary; but a woman's spirit never tires. Do you understand that?"

"I think your meaning is clear."

"Trouble with your husband, say you?" Mrs. Weakly spoke half lightly, half seriously. "I'm afraid you permitted him to get the upper hand in the beginning. Husbands are rarely troublesome unless this have occurred."

"I don't know what it is, but there's something wrong." The tone in which Mrs. Eldridge said this showed that her mind was not very clear on the subject of her relation to her husband.

"Ah—that 'something wrong!' How many thousands of unhappy women sigh out those words in weakness and discouragement! How many thou

sands faint and fall by the way, unable to bear the chain that holds them fast in a cruel bondage. Men are strong, physically, and their position involves the temptation to exercise power. Few are proof against this temptation. Ah, my friend, if the annals of domestic tyranny could be written and published to the world, stern hearts would melt and ruddy cheeks pale at the fearful history."

"I believe you," said Mrs. Eldridge, catching the spirit of her friend.

"And yet," continued Mrs. Weakly, "woman is really stronger than man, and, if she but willed to do it, could bend him like a reed. I wish all wives had my spirit."

"I wish they had," replied Mrs. Eldridge; "for the whole community of men need to be taught a few wholesome lessons."

"Indeed they do! Well, I've done my part; and I'm very sure Weakly is a happier man for it. No one grows any better for indulgence in arbitrary rule. We both do pretty much as we please, and go out and come in when we please. I never permit myself to be a clog upon his movements, and he shows no disposition to become a clog upon mine. I like company, and so does he; but our appreciation of qualities is different. I don't always fancy his friends, nor does he always fancy mine. The fact is, our union is now rightly based on the rock of common sense, and not on the seething furnace of what people *call* love, the vapors from which are ever and anon blinding and scorching. I know some

wives who are as 'fraid as death of their husbands, and will give up the dearest friendships merely to gratify their whims. It wouldn't do for Weakly to try that experiment with me. I'm old enough, wise enough, and independent enough, to choose my own friends; have always done so, and will continue to do so unto the end."

These remarks brought to the remembrance of Mrs. Eldridge a troubled passage in her own history. She had formed a pleasant acquaintance with a lady in the village, against whom her husband entertained a strong prejudice,—so strong that he objected to his wife's visiting her. The circumstance caused a good deal of unhappiness at the time, and was never recalled without uncomfortable feelings.

"Some husbands are very unreasonable on the subject of their wives' friendships," she said. "Mr. Eldridge is not an exception to the rule. It's his fault, entirely, that a coolness exists between me and Mrs. Glendy."

"Oh, yes!" Mrs. Weakly spoke with animation. "Mrs. Glendy was talking to me only yesterday about you. She says that from some cause you have ceased to visit her; though of the reason she is entirely ignorant, never having done or said any thing against you, but, on the contrary, having always spoken in your praise. 'The fact is, Mrs. Weakly,' said she, 'I always liked Mrs. Eldridge, and always shall like her.'"

"And I always did like and always shall like

her." replied Mrs. Eldridge. "Nothing separates us but a whim of my husband's."

"Whim! Humph! It wouldn't do for Weakly to try any of his whims upon me. But what, in the name of wonder, has he to say against the woman?"

"He's heard something to her discredit, I believe."

"What?"

"Oh, well, I can't just repeat what was said."

"Nothing against her character?" Mrs. Weakly bent over in a confidential way toward Mrs. Eldridge, and spoke in an insinuating voice.

"No, nothing special: only——"

"Only what? Don't be afraid to speak out plainly; I will regard all you say as strictly confidential."

"Well, the truth is, some people in the village do talk a little freely about her; though I never believed a word that was said."

"What do they say?"

"Oh, well, you know how people will talk sometimes. Mrs. Glendy is a pleasant, cheerful, companionable woman, who keeps a good deal of company, and lays herself liable to misjudgment from a certain class of prudish persons."

"Yes, I understand. But to the pure all things are pure. Envious people are sadly given to slandering their neighbors, I'm sorry to say, and we have some of the envious in Arden. Their spite would be harmless if there was not such a readiness in the human mind to believe in evil reports. I believe

Mrs. Glendy to be as good as the best in this neighborhood; and I'm very sorry your husband's foolish prejudice should step in between you and one of the most agreeable women in our town, who regrets the alienation and sincerely desires a restoration of friendly intercourse."

"It's very unreasonable in Mr. Eldridge," was remarked, with considerable warmth.

"Downright tyranny I should call it, were it my case," said Mrs. Weakly.

"I was wrong, perhaps, ever to have yielded the point."

"There is no doubt in the world of that," replied Mrs. Weakly. "It was a mortal blunder. To yield in this way is to invite aggression."

Mrs. Eldridge sat and mused for some time.

"I have a great mind to call upon Mrs. Glendy to-morrow," said she, with some manifestation of spirit.

"I'd do it," was the encouraging response.

"I'm just vexed enough with Mr. Eldridge to feel reckless. He's been encroaching on me a little too much of late. If I thought there was the slightest truth in the rumors about Mrs. Glendy, I would never go near her; but——"

"Slander! slander! vile slander!" exclaimed Mrs. Weakly, with unusual animation. "There isn't a word of truth in any rumor that says she is not pure and good. And isn't it cruel, Mrs. Eldridge, to desert a right-minded woman because evil lips insinuate evil against her? We should all make com-

mon cause with the unjustly accused. It should be the glory of our sex to sustain a slandered sister, and not desert her in the hour of trial. Who knows how soon the painful experience may be our own?—for none are so pure that suspicion may not throw a passing stain upon our garments."

"True; very true," said Mrs. Eldridge; "and your words oppress me with self-condemnation. I have not been just to Mrs. Glendy."

"The best can only make reparation for error."

"Be it my task to repair this error. To-morrow morning I will call upon Mrs. Glendy."

"Do so, by all means," urged the visitor. "If you do not wish to raise a breeze with your husband, why, say nothing to him about it. I, for one, don't believe in wives giving their husbands a minute history of all they say, think, or do."

"Oh! you needn't class me with such silly wives I know how to keep my own counsel."

In conversation of a like tenor the two ladies spent a couple of hours, and then Mrs. Weakly returned home, taking one of Mrs. Eldridge's servants to keep her company by the way.

CHAPTER V.

TEMPTATION.

It was after ten o'clock when Mrs. Weakly returned home. For nearly half an hour Mrs. Eldridge sat with her thoughts so busy in the new direction they had taken that the unusual stay of her husband was not remarked.

"Ten minutes of eleven!" she exclaimed, in a surprised tone, as her eyes fell accidentally upon the clock, "and Morgan not home yet! This is very unusual."

And Mrs. Eldridge arose and went to the window. Raising it, she looked first up and then down the broad village street, along which the white houses shone in the gilding moonbeams. The quiet beauty of the scene wrought an almost instant change upon her feelings, softening their tone and touching them with a hue of sadness. For several minutes she looked forth expectantly, but no living form was visible. Feeling a chilliness creeping over her, she closed the window, yet still remained gazing out.

"I don't like this," she murmured, as thought went backward. "I wish Morgan would come home. What can keep him away so late?"

When Mr. Eldridge left his home that evening, fairly driven away by his wife's ungenial spirit,—he

was a home-loving man, and rarely went out after nightfall, except forced to do so by business or political engagements,—he walked slowly down the street, sad and purposeless. He was moving along, with his eyes upon the ground, when an arm was drawn within his, and a familiar voice said,—

"Good-evening, Eldridge! Which way?"

"Just taking a little stroll in the pleasant moon light," was answered.

"Ah! I didn't suppose there was any romance or poetry left in you, after ten years' experience as a lawyer," remarked the other.

"There isn't much left, I can assure you," said Eldridge, with some feeling. "The world soon takes all the nonsense out of us."

"Indeed it does. It took it all out of me years ago, and I'm now as cold and unromantic as an oyster. There was a time when I enjoyed a moonlight evening and could read poetry with a zest, but that time is long since passed. I don't understand poetry now; and moonlight or midnight is all the same to me, so far as emotion is concerned. The heart gains immobility as we grow older. Is not this so in all cases?"

"I can hardly answer 'yes' to your closing query, Mr. Craig," said Eldridge. "Sometimes I have thought that my heart was growing stern and hard; but suddenly it has shown itself weak almost to woman's tenderness. We are strange beings!"

"I shouldn't suspect you of weakness, Mr. Eldridge."

"Nor am I given to such weakness. Contact with the world ices over the heart, but does not always chill the central impulses."

By this time the two men were at the lower end of the town, where stood the tavern.

"Come in and take something to drink with me, said the companion of Eldridge.

The latter made no objection, but entered the tavern and joined him in a glass of liquor at the bar. They then went out upon the porch, and took seats at some distance from a group of men who were discussing politics. Conversation between them was, for a short time, made up of the ordinary commonplaces. In a pause, Craig leaned closer to Mr. Eldridge, and said, in a confidential way,—

"I expected to see Judge Gray here to-night."

"Ah? Isn't he about?"

"No; not yet. The judge and I have been talking over a little speculation." And Craig spoke in a still lower voice. "He's here almost every evening, and I thought I should meet him to-night. Ah! there he is now!" was added, in quickened tone: and he arose and advanced toward a man just entering the porch.

The two greeted each other familiarly, stood and conversed a few moments in an undertone, and then came forward to where Eldridge was sitting.

"Good-evening, Eldridge," said the judge, in a frank, cordial tone of voice. "Where do you keep yourself these fine evenings? It's really a treat to get one's eyes on you after court-hours."

"Oh, I'm one of your home-bodies," returned Eldridge, pleasantly, as he took the judge's hand. "Office-business usually occupies all my spare time out of court, and when night comes I feel more inclined to thoughtful quiet than social intercourse. It is a fault of mine, perhaps."

"No doubt of that," returned Judge Gray. "No man has a right to shut himself out from the company of his friends. At least four evenings out of six I take a stroll down here, to have a cosy chat with some one, and I'm all the better and brighter for it. Our own thoughts, if left too much to themselves, soon run thick and move sluggishly. Don't you find it so, Craig?"

"I have found it so in times past; but I take care nowadays to keep the channel free. Good fellowship is essential to the mind's healthy action. Home is a fine institution. Every man should have a home; but there is something for us to do and enjoy in the world outside of home. A man's obligations to his family are high and sacred duties, and should ever be faithfully discharged; but their observance will not absolve him from social duties. His friends have claims upon him as well as his family."

"Truly said," remarked the judge; "and I trust our friend Eldridge will take the lesson to heart. He needs to con it well."

"I'm not unsocial, by any means," said Mr. Eldridge, with some animation.

"Not by nature, I will admit," replied Judge

Gray;—"but practically you are, and growing more and more so every day."

"You think so?"

"I know so When, pray, have we seen you here, for instance? Not for a month!"

"I've been here within that time."

"How often, pray?"

"Once, at least."

"Once! For shame, Eldridge! I would have thrown that out and called it nothing. Once! Why, I'm here at least four times a week, and that's none too often."

"Too often for me," said Eldridge, firmly. "Once or twice a week would be an extreme concession to the social requirement."

"Very well. Have it your own way. Give us two evenings in the week, and we will be thankful."

"I cannot promise." And Eldridge shook his head, laughing at the same time.

"We have you this evening, at all events," said the judge. "Perhaps we can interest you to a degree that will make your return a thing of course We shall see."

"I'm in your hands," was the light response.

"And shall be well cared for. Come; let us go up to one of the private rooms. I have a basket of choice old wine in the landlord's cellar, set apart for my particular friends. We'll break a bottle."

The three men went into the house and up to the private rooms mentioned by Judge Gray. And there we will leave them.

Eleven o'clock passed, and Mrs. Eldridge was still a watcher for her absent husband. She felt troubled and far from self-satisfied. Conscience, to whose small voice she tried, in vain, to close her ears, whispered in them rebuking words, and charged upon her unkindness.

"What can keep him so late?" she said aloud, in a voice that would have betrayed her anxiety, had there been a listener near. As she thus spoke, she went again to the window and looked earnestly up and down the moonlit street. She was about turning away, after standing there for some minutes, when the appearance of two men in the distance caused her heart to leap, and she kept her place at the window, with her eyes riveted upon the two figures, which advanced along the street very slowly. At last they were near enough for Mrs. Eldridge to distinguish, in one of them, her husband; but the person of the other she could not make out. The men were in very earnest conversation, and passed the house, on the opposite side of the street, without pausing. A little beyond, Mr. Eldridge stopped,—his wife could see him distinctly in the strong moonlight,—and glanced around in a kind of bewildered manner, as if he had lost, in mariners' phrase, his "reckoning." Comprehending, in a little while, that he had gone beyond his home, he turned, and walked back until opposite, his companion returning with him, and talking all the while earnestly.

For some minutes the men stood on the pavement, in full view of Mrs. Eldridge, who had let the cur-

tains fall, and now peered, unobserved, through a small opening in the drapery. They still talked with animation, the companion of Eldridge gesticulating with considerable violence. Two or three times the latter broke away and made an attempt to cross the street; but the other advanced as he retreated, even grasping his arm to detain him while he uttered his rapidly-spoken sentences. Then Eldridge would speak in turn, but not with the other's warmth.

At last they separated. When half-way across the street, Eldridge stopped. His companion had turned back, and called him:—

"Don't forget to-morrow night!"

"I'll be there," was the reply of Eldridge. Both sentences were heard by his wife.

The instant Mrs. Eldridge saw the two men finally separate, she retired from the window. At the same moment a revulsion in her feelings began. Anxiety gave place to disapprobation of her husband's conduct in remaining away until so unusual an hour, and self-reproaches to an accusing spirit. When he entered the room, her first words, spoken in a tone that could not fail to irritate, were,—

"Home at last, are you? I wonder you hadn't stayed out all night!"

"I might, if I had been sure of no better reception at home."

There was an unusual sharpness in the tones of Mr. Eldridge. In most cases, if his wife spoke with unkindness or irritation, he maintained a perfect

silence, and thus prevented the fires of discord from blazing out. And it would have been so on this occasion, had not the old wine of Judge Craig been mingled too freely with his blood, obscuring his reason and firing his temper.

"Where have you been?" There was something almost imperious in the voice of Mrs. Eldridge, as she fixed her dark eyes upon the face of her husband. The latter returned the glance of his wife, steadily, for almost a minute, and then said, slightly curling his lip,—

"My lady had better lower her tone. Her manner is by no means agreeable."

"Morgan!" Mrs. Eldridge stamped her foot. But her anger was impotent, and she felt it to be so, for in the next moment she was in a passion of tears.

Without seeming to notice this effervescence of feeling, Eldridge quietly undressed himself, and was in bed and fast asleep ere the sobbing of the tempest that raged for a time in the mind of his wife had died away into silence.

It was long past midnight when the aching head of Mrs. Eldridge pressed its pillow, and well on to the morning watches ere slumber sealed her eyelids. The thoughts that kept her awake were among the most troubled of her life.

CHAPTER VI.

A SERIOUS ERROR.

MR. ELDRIDGE was awakened on the next morning by the loud cries of the children in angry contention. The voice of Katy was, as usual, mingling sharply with the voices of her brothers; and it was plain that, as usual, she had taken one side in a quarrel between them.

"Oh, dear! those children again!" he said, as he started up in bed. He found that his wife had arisen and left the chamber. Soon her voice was heard above their war of words, and cries of passion were quickly changed into cries of pain.

"All wrong! All wrong!" murmured the disturbed husband and father, sinking back upon his pillow, where he lay in no pleasant state of mind for nearly ten minutes. Then he arose, and prepared to meet his family at the breakfast-table. Clouds rested on the parents' brows; they scarcely looked into each other's faces. The children were restless and contentious, as usual, and were all driven by their mother from the table ere the meal was half completed.

"Katy, you come back!" said Mr. Eldridge, as their daughter was leaving the room with her brothers; "you'll only set them by the ears."

Katy was retunring, when her mother started up, and said,—

"Didn't I tell you to go out? Leave us this instant."

The face of Mrs. Eldridge was like scarlet, while her eyes flashed and her lips quivered.

The child, with a frightened look, hurried out after her brothers.

"I'll thank you, when I speak to the children, not to interfere!" said Mrs. Eldridge, with indignation. "You complain that I don't govern them rightly; and yet, when I attempt to use authority, you set it aside."

Mr. Eldridge did not so much as lift his eyes to his wife's face, but went on eating his breakfast. A few minutes afterward he arose and retired to his office, to take up the business of the day.

At ten o'clock Mr. Eldridge went to court. He hadn't been gone more than half an hour, when Mrs. Weakly came in, and, in her friendly, winning way, said,—

"As you are going to call on Mrs. Glendy this morning, I thought I would go with you. I owe her a visit."

Now, Mrs. Eldridge had thought a little more soberly about the matter since parting with Mrs. Weakly, and a feeling of prudent hesitation had succeeded to her first determination to act in clear defiance of her husband's wishes. Unfortunately, the scene at the breakfast-table had excited something like resentment against her husband, and

all the truer perceptions of her mind were again darkened. Only a moment she hesitated before replying,—

"Thank you for calling, my dear Mrs. Weakly! I'll be ready in a few minutes."

Then, excusing herself until she made a hasty toilette, Mrs. Eldridge went with lighter footsteps than heart to her chamber.

"I wish I had not promised to go this morning," she said aloud, as she sat down on the side of her bed. "Mrs. Weakly seems possessed to drag me off to see that woman. If I only felt right about it! Oh, dear! what a feverish state we do live in! I'm sick to death with myself and everybody else. There's always some trouble or another springing up. The sky is never clear for a day at a time. Precious little do I feel like visiting this morning. I wish that woman had stayed at home and minded her own business. She'll get me into some difficulty before she's done with me: I feel it."

A little while Mrs. Eldridge sat with her eyes fixed on vacancy. Then, starting up, she said, with reviving spirit,—

"Pshaw! This is an unwomanly weakness!"

It did not take her long to arrange her dress. In a much shorter time than is usually occupied by ladies in preparing to go out, she was ready, and went tripping down-stairs, to join her friend, as lightly as if a care had never laid a feather's weight upon her spirit.

"Not tired of waiting, I hope?" she said to Mrs. Weakly.

"Oh, dear, no! You're ready in half the time it takes most people. But I've a world of patience. Want of thought is what makes time pass heavily. I'm always thinking about something or other,—always doing some kind of brain-work, you see; and that makes the hours pass as fleetly as if they had wings."

The two ladies were moving down the hall toward the door, when a voice was heard calling Mrs. Eldridge. It was that of the cook; and Mrs. Eldridge stepped back to hear what she had to say.

"Will you be home soon, ma'am?" was inquired.

"I expect to be: why?"

"Because, ma'am, there's nothing in the house for dinner."

"Oh, I'll return early enough to see about that," replied Mrs. Eldridge, partly turning away.

"But maybe ye'll be kept away longer than ye thinks. And what then, ma'am?"

"Pick up something, in that case. But I'll be home in time."

And Mrs. Eldridge hurried off to join her friend.

"Pick up something! Yis, indade! And nice picking up it will be! Home in time! Ha! Who ever saw her leddyship home in time when she once got a-going?"

"I'm so glad you're about to call on Mrs. Glendy!" said Mrs. Weakly, as soon as they were on the street. "She's a lovely woman, and tongue of slander never

did a fouler work than when it tried to blacken her name."

They had gone only a few paces, when Mrs. Eldridge saw her husband on the opposite side of the street, standing in a group of three or four men, talking.

"Mr. Eldridge," said Mrs. Weakly, intimating that she saw the husband of her friend.

"Yes; I see him," was simply answered.

"Weakly's there also; and I'm glad of it."

"Why?" inquired Mrs. Eldridge.

"Because we had a little spat last night—an unusual thing for us nowadays, you must know—about Mrs. Glendy. He said something in reference to her that didn't just please me, and I took him down pretty sharply."

"What did he say?"

"Oh, some vile thing that I can't repeat. Men talk scandalously sometimes. They're bad to the core,—all of them! But, as I was saying, I'm glad Weakly's there. They're just in sight of Mrs. Glendy's, and he will see us go in. So will your husband."

By no means a pleasant reflection was this to Mrs. Eldridge. She was not yet prepared to set her husband so openly at defiance. But there was no retreat now, for she had not the moral courage to let her friend see that she could be deterred from going because the eyes of her husband were upon her. She did not reply, but walked on in silence. What a heavy pressure was on her feelings! Mrs. Glendy

lived on the main street, and her house was in view from the point where Mr. Eldridge stood, and if he remained there he would see her go in. A fierce conflict raged in her mind as she moved along,—pride, indignation, defiance, regret, shame, in turn gaining the ascendency. But there was no turning back now. Pride was the o'ermastering passion.

It flashed instantly on the mind of Mr. Eldridge, when he saw his wife pass in company with Mrs. Weakly, that she was going to call on Mrs. Glendy, notwithstanding he had so decidedly expressed, time and again, his opinion that she ought not to be on terms of intimacy with her, and should by no means visit at her house.

"Your cara sposa," said Mr. Weakly, tossing his head toward the two ladies, as they passed, opposite.

"And yours," replied Eldridge, smiling.

"I wonder on what errand of mercy they are bent this morning." Weakly spoke in a light voice.

The other gentlemen of the group turned their eyes upon Mrs. Eldridge and Mrs. Weakly, thus referred to by their husbands; but no other remark in reference to them was made. The conversation went on again, but Eldridge took no further part in it, though he seemed to be listening with careful attention. His eyes and his thoughts were on his wife, whose form was gradually receding in the distance and drawing nearer and nearer to the dwelling of Mrs. Glendy.

"George!" suddenly ejaculated Mr. Weakly,

whose gaze had also been fixed upon the ladies. "Is it possible!"

"What possible?" inquired two or three of the gentlemen, as their eyes took the direction of Weakly's.

"What can possess the woman?" added Weakly. "I thought I had said enough to her about Mrs. Glendy, and there she is calling upon her in broad daylight!—and your wife is with her, Eldridge. Don't you know better than to let her visit that woman?"

Surprise was pictured in the countenance of all the gentlemen, some of whom shook their heads and looked gravely knowing. A dark shadow fell over the face of Mr. Eldridge, and his heart throbbed with shame and indignation.

"Women are strangely perverse sometimes," he remarked, with as much external indifference as he could assume, and then, after a brief struggle with himself, said, in a quiet voice, addressing one of the company, with whom he had commenced moving away from the spot where they had been standing,—

"What were you saying about the judge?"

"Judge Gray?"

"Yes."

"Let me see: them women have put it out of my head. Oh, yes! now I remember. The judge is one of the cleverest and most free-hearted men in the country."

"He has that reputation."

"And justly so. I know him like a book, and

have yet to learn the first unmanly trait in his character. He is open-hearted and open-handed."

Eldridge did not fully respond either in thought or word to this unqualified eulogium. He had always liked Judge Gray for his kind, free, social qualities, but had never thought him a man of tried principles.

"I think you said that he talked of buying that mill property?" said Eldridge.

"Yes; I know he has his eye upon it and will purchase if he can get it right. He's shrewd at a bargain."

"For all his free, social qualities, the judge doesn't grow any poorer," remarked Eldridge. "He has the reputation of looking out for the main chance."

"It is safe being in the boat with such a man."

"Ah! now I understand you, friend Craig. You remarked last night that you and the judge were talking over a little speculation. This is it; and you are to have an interest in the matter?"

"You've guessed it,—but, under-the-rose, remember. I thought the judge would have mentioned it himself last night, for I know he means to talk with ou on the subject, and get you interested, if possible."

Eldridge shook his head, and remarked,—

"I never had any fancy for speculation. I belong to the plodding, easy-going, slow-and-sure division of humanity."

"This is as safe as a gold-mine," said Craig.

"Perhaps it is. Many a gold-mine absorbs more than it yields."

They had reached the corner of the street, and were about separating.

"We'll see you at McQuillan's to-night?" said Craig.

"Can't say. Am doubtful."

"The judge will be there."

"I presume so, from what he said last night."

"I know he wants to see you and have a talk about that mill property."

"Let him call in at my office, then. I'm always at home. We can talk there free from all disturbance."

"I can't answer for him on that head. But think over the matter; and, if time hangs in the least heavy on your hands to-night, just step down to McQuillan's. You'll find us there, and receive a hearty welcome."

The two men parted, and Eldridge moved on toward the court-house, instantly forgetful of all else but his domestic infelicities. His wife's visit to Mrs. Glendy—a woman whose name was spoken in light familiarity by nearly every man in the town of Arden—had so confounded him that he was bewildered, as well as sorely troubled. Since his positive objections to his wife's keeping up the acquaintance, he had heard a great deal more about the woman that had a very disreputable aspect. If she were not of positively bad character, she was at least culpably imprudent; and this was sufficient for Mr. Eldridge.

A case of some importance occupied his attention in court during the entire morning-session. It was nearly two o'clock when he was released from attendance. As soon as he could get away he hurried home. As usual, the moment he entered his door the noise of riot and wrangling among the children fell painfully upon his ears, and, as usual, the shrill voice of Katy was heard high above the din.

"Where's your mother?" he inquired, as he entered the sitting-room, where a scene of the utmost disorder presented itself:—chairs upset, the table drawn into the middle of the room, work-basket overthrown, and the floor covered with books, papers, caps, and sticks of wood, pieces of broken china, &c., in disheartening confusion.

"She isn't home," answered Katy. The wild uproar had become instantly stilled at the father's entrance.

Mr. Eldridge stood for a few moments surveying the scene, and then, turning away, went down-stairs and took refuge in his office. He had just closed the door behind him, when he heard his wife enter and move quickly along the passage. His first impulse was to follow her to her room and angrily demand her reason for having acted in such gross defiance of his expressed wishes. But, ere he had moved forward a pace, reason checked the movement, and warned him not to be guilty of simple folly. Experience had sadly proved to him that when his wife's passions were aroused she was blind and headstrong, and that his hand was not strong

enough to curb her will. Her tongue pierced like a dagger and cut like a tempered sword. In a war of words he had no chance with her. As a lawyer, he had encountered many unscrupulous antagonists, but never one so unscrupulous as his wife.

All this glanced through his mind as he stood checked in the movement to follow her. Then he sat down heavily, with a smothered groan, and buried his face in his hands. The quiet that succeeded his visit to the sitting-room was of but short duration. A very different result followed the appearance of his wife in that scene of disorder. At once her indignation boiled over, and, without stopping to ask questions or utter a reproof, she commenced passionately striking the children by turns about their heads, faces, and shoulders, pouring out upon them at the same time a torrent of angry invective.

The sound of all this caused Mr. Eldridge to start to his feet, and in the moment's excitement to bound half-way up the stairs, with the purpose of interposing a stern authority between his children and their rage-blind mother. But he checked himself in the movement, conscious of his impotency in the case, and went sadly, and almost hopelessly, back to his office. There he sat, in troubled self-communion, until the dinner-bell startled him with its unwelcome, rather than welcome, sound. Slowly he arose, and with slow pace took his way to the dining-room, where his wife and children had preceded him. He found nothing very inviting there,

ither in the company or the repast. The only rticles of food on the table were a dish of oiled potatoes, a plate of bread, and another of utter.

Mrs. Eldridge, with a face like scarlet, was inging the table-bell violently, which summons vas answered by the cook, who came up-stairs vith a slow, firm step, as if preparing herself to brave a storm.

"Is this all the dinner you've got?" demanded Mrs. Eldridge.

"Yis, ma'am," was replied, in a composed voice.

"What's the meaning of such conduct? How dare you get up a meal like this?"

"Sure, ma'am," answered the cook, as calm as a spring morning, "and didn't I tell yez that we had nothing in the house for dinner?—and didn't ye say that ye'd be home in time? I've done the best I could, ma'am. There was nothing else to get."

"It's a lie! You dirty hussy!" exclaimed Mrs. Eldridge, thrown into a perfect rage. "To dare to treat me so! Leave my sight and the house this instant, you miserable Irish trollop!"

"As ye likes, ma'am," returned the girl, with an unruffled manner. "Hard words break no bones. I've done my duty, and I hope you'll always do yours as well."

"Go! go!" screamed Mrs. Eldridge, wellnigh thrown into hysterics by this unexpected climax to the scenes of the day.

The girl withdrew, but, instead of going back to the kitchen, ascended to the attic. Mr. Eldridge had no appetite left for even the most tempting dishes, much less for the uninviting fare that had been set before him. So he pushed his chair back, and left his wife and children to make the best of the scanty meal which the cook had provided. After musing for a short time in his office, he went out, and, undetermined what to do or where to go, he strolled along the street, and, ere conscious of the distance he had gone, found himself at the extreme end of the town, and near the handsome residence of Judge Gray. The judge was standing at his gate, and greeted him with his usual frank and cordial manner, insisting on his coming in and taking a glass of wine with him.

Eldridge could not well say "no" to the judge's invitation, and so he went in, and they chatted a few minutes over their wine. While thus engaged, the dinner-bell interrupted them.

"Just in time!" said Judge Gray, laying his hand firmly on the arm of Eldridge. "You haven't dined yet?"

"No—ye—yes," stammered Eldridge.

"Exactly! I've some fine woodcock, and am all alone to-day. So you shall be my guest, willingly or per force, as the case may be."

"Pray, excuse me," said Eldridge. "I must go home."

"No excuse. I'll send a note of apology to your lady, if desired, and say that you are a pris-

against your will. Come! The fine flavor of the birds is wasting itself."

And, unheeding all his guest's protestations and excuses, he conducted him to the dining-room.

CHAPTER VII.

TROUBLE.

In external matters it was far from being as well with Dr. Penrose as he desired. He did not possess by nature the qualities requisite to a rapid advancement in the world. He was more timid than sanguine, and far too sensitive to push his way amid personal opposition or at the risk of personal ill-will. His tastes had, so far in life, led him to desire elegancies in his household far beyond his ability to obtain. Even the few indulgencies ventured upon had drawn so heavily on his slender purse that a sense of poverty took away all true enjoyment, and the few choice pictures, vases, and statuettes which he had bought were scarcely looked at with interest once in a fortnight. He observed, not without a feeling of discouragement or discontent, other men, starting with him side-by-side in life, gradually or rapidly rising into the possession of fortunes,—men with intellectual abilities, in most cases, ranging far below his own. Even in his profession he saw some of his fellow-students, who had scarcely

crowded through their examination, (he had made a brilliant advent into the ranks of his profession,) steadily advancing their worldly interests, while he was barely able to secure enough to keep want from the home that sheltered his beloved ones. Even in the village of Arden inferior skill to his own found a predominating popularity.

Several things had occurred, on the day referred to in the preceding chapter, to depress and discourage Dr. Penrose and to fill his mind with gloomy doubts. A few years before, he had ventured, after a more than usually encouraging season, to purchase the house in which he lived, paying down five hundred dollars, which he had saved, and engaging to pay five hundred a year for the four successive years The cost of the property was twenty-five hundred dollars. Interest was, of course, to be allowed on the balance unpaid. To secure this balance there was a mortgage on the property.

As it had turned out with Dr. Penrose from the beginning, it turned out now. His hopes were not fully realized. Instead of being able to pay off five hundred a year, he had only accomplished an annual reduction of three hundred. The holder of the mortgage grew more and more impatient of delay, and this impatience fretted the doctor sorely. His temper was quick, and he had little control over his words when under excitement. The consequence was that he had replied to the holder of the mortgage, on two or three occasions, in so tart a manner that ill-feeling was created. A threat of foreclosure

followed, very naturally, to which the doctor answered in a defiant manner.

James Barlow, the holder of the mortgage, was a speculator in property, and owned a large portion of the best lots in the town of Arden. He was an eager, grasping, unscrupulous man, and never hesitated about ruining a poor debtor, if that ruin were deemed by him necessary for the security of even a small sum of money. About two years after his sale to Dr. Penrose there was a sudden rise in property in the doctor's immediate neighborhood, consequent upon the choice of a fine lot, not far distant, by the county commissioners, for the erection of handsome county buildings, with extensive grounds. The value of the doctor's house and half-acre of ground was at once advanced one thousand dollars. Barlow's first emotion, on learning where the new county buildings were to be located, was one of regret that he did not still own the house in which Dr. Penrose lived.

"I'd have been fifteen hundred dollars better off to-day, if I'd kept that property," he said to himself, with a feeling of chagrin. "Why can't we know what is going to happen?"

It was only a day or two afterward that the doctor called to make his half-yearly payment on the mortgage. His previous payment had only been one hundred and fifty dollars, and he had promised to make this three hundred and fifty. But the doctor's expectations had been again disappointed; he could only make up one hundred and fifty, and

one-third of that sum he had been compelled to borrow.

Mr. Barlow, when the money was counted out on the table before him, looked grave.

"It is mortifying to me," said the doctor, in a depressed manner, "to ask a little more indulgence. But physicians' bills are the hardest in the world to collect. There is over a thousand dollars of good accounts due me, but nobody is ready to pay."

Mr. Barlow drew the money toward him, and for some time sat regarding it in moody silence.

"I fully expected the whole sum due. I have use for it, Dr. Penrose."

"I have done the best in my power," replied the doctor.

Mr. Barlow had a daughter, whom the doctor, a few weeks before, had brought through a dangerous illness. Gratitude for the unwearied attention and devoted skill of the physician had not quite died out of the man's hard heart. A passing remembrance of one or two scenes in the sick-chamber reproved his present unkindness, and constrained him to say, in rather a softened manner,—

"Let it pass, now."

A receipt was hastily written; and, as he handed it to the doctor, he remarked, in a voice that was meant to be a little cheerful,—

"You must try and do better next year. Remember that the property I sold you has materially improved in value."

"I'll do the best I can," replied Dr. Penrose, as

he folded up the receipt. He stood a few moments, and then coldly turned away, feeling so discouraged and humiliated that he went to his home, instead of visiting some patients who needed his attention, and, shutting the door of his office, abandoned himself to weakness and despondency.

The year that succeeded proved one of no materially-increasing prosperity to Dr. Penrose. The first six months' payment to Mr. Barlow, received under protest, was but one hundred and fifty dollars.

Another half-year had expired, and the doctor had again called upon his creditor. The result of this interview was one of the causes of depression referred to near the opening of this chapter. He could raise no more than about an equal sum to that accumulated at the last pay-day. With this, in a chafed, defiant state of mind, he called upon Barlow. He expected trouble, and was prepared to meet it in the worst way possible.

The two men met in no amiable mood with each other. Barlow saw, on his first glance at the doctor's face, that he had come with the old story of deficient collections, and his mind was made up not to accept any more excuses in the place of money.

"Good-morning, doctor."

"Good-morning."

For some moments the two men looked at each other half-askance.

"I've brought you some more money," said Dr. Penrose, drawing out his pocket-book as he spoke.

"How much?" was asked.

"The old story again. Only——"

"I'm tired of the old story," said Barlow, a little roughly. "I can't take any more half payments."

The doctor thrust his wallet back into his pocket. His face crimsoned and his lips quivered.

"As you like," he answered, with assumed indifference.

"I expect payment according to contract:—nothing more, nothing less," said Barlow.

"I can give you a hundred and seventy dollars," was replied.

"It won't answer. I want the whole amount due from the beginning."

"But I have said, Mr. Barlow, that one hundred and seventy was all I could pay. Impossibilities should be required of no man."

"Men should not engage to do impossibilities. I could have sold that property a dozen times over at an advance of a thousand dollars on what you agreed to pay for it."

"It's no use to waste words. I've told you the best I could do," said the doctor, impatiently.

"Very well. If that's all you can do, my course is clear. I can easily make the money."

"What! How?" Dr. Penrose turned short around, and fixed his eyes keenly upon the face of his creditor.

"The money can be raised quite easily," was coolly replied. "Mortgages are safe investments. Let me give you this piece of advice. To save yourself trouble, borrow the sum needed to make

all your payments good up to this day. Otherwise——"

There was a brief hesitation.

"Say on!" Dr. Penrose flung the words out indignantly.

"The mortgage will be immediately foreclosed."

"Good-morning!" was all the reply that was made to this threat, and the men parted.

Had Dr. Penrose acted as he felt, he would have gone home and folded his hands in despair. He was, indeed, on his way thither, when a thought of his loving, patient, true-hearted wife, who, in all trials and discouragements, had for him a word of comfort, arrested his steps, and caused him to say,—

"This is unmanly. No! I will not give up thus without an effort. The property is worth double the sum that remains unpaid. Some one in Arden will help me out of my difficulty."

As he walked slowly along, thinking first of one and then of another, his mind at last rested on Judge Gray as the man who would, most probably, aid him in his extremity. He was physician in the judge's family, and the judge had always manifested what seemed a friendly interest. So he called upon him and found him disengaged.

"I'm in trouble, Judge Gray," he said, coming, without circumlocution, to the business upon which he had called.

"I'm sorry to hear that, doctor. What's the matter?"

"Barlow threatens to enter up the mortgage on my house."

"What's the meaning of that?"

"Simply this and no more. I engaged to pay him five hundred a year on the property, and have only been able to raise three hundred. He's out of patience, and will bear with me no longer. I've done all I could; the best can do nothing more. Ah, me! This life-struggle is a hard one. It is no easy thing to battle with the world. Heaven knows, I devote myself with untiring assiduity to my profession, but I make slow progress."

"Tut, tut, doctor! Don't give up in that sort of fashion. A man never helps himself along in the world by giving way to despondency. How much is still due on your house?"

"Counting interest and all, about fifteen hundred dollars."

"What's it worth?"

"Thirty-five hundred, if it's worth a copper."

A broad smile passed over the judge's countenance.

"Not a very desperate case, it strikes me."

"Desperate enough, where you haven't an extra dollar to help yourself with."

"If I had the cash to spare I'd take the mortgage at once. But don't fret yourself, doctor. All will come out right. You'll find no difficulty in raising every dollar you want."

"But where, judge, where?"

"I can't answsr that question on the spot. Let me see."

The judge thought for a little while, and then said,—

"The fact is, doctor, you are too exclusively a professional man, and mingle too little on social terms with your fellow-citizens. You know but little of your townsmen personally, and they know but little of you. When sick, they send for you, and, when well, dismiss you from their thoughts. Now, all this works against your advancement in the world. There are plenty of money-making operations in a place like this, which the shrewd and observant take part in. Small ventures often make large returns. You should know all about what is going on, and be ready to take advantage of fair opportunities. Do you suppose my salary as judge would enable me to accumulate property? Not a bit of it. But I am always wide awake, and ready to venture when the promise is best."

"I'm no man of the world, judge," replied the doctor, "and, I'm afraid, never will be. Outside of my profession I am little more than an inexperienced child."

"All very foolish of you,—all very unmanly, if you will excuse me for saying so," answered the judge. "But let the past suffice. Come out among us, and let us know you better. Mingle as a man with your fellow-citizens. Take some interest in public affairs, and you will find yourself, at the end of a year, enough better off to encourage

you to go in the good way. Are you engaged this evening?"

"Not specially."

"Very well. Come down to McQuillan's after tea. A few of us meet there in reference to some property speculations that show a splendid promise. There is no reason in the world why you should not have an interest therein as well as any one else."

"I'm not sharp enough for business of this kind," said the doctor. "I have studied my profession carefully, and believe myself skilled in the art of healing; but of general business I know but little, and, were I to trust myself on the sea of speculation, would, most certainly, make shipwreck of every thing."

"Not a bit of it. You'll soon get your eyes open," replied the judge. "All is plainer sailing than you imagine. At any rate, come down this evening and hear and see a little for yourself. It will be an introduction, if nothing more, and bring you into closer contact with men who have the ability to help you in your present need. Personal ntercourse does a great deal sometimes."

"I'll think about it," said the doctor.

"Nonsense! Say you'll come." The judge seemed particularly urgent. "I want you there for special reasons."

"I can't think of any thing else now but this cursed mortgage," replied Dr. Penrose, with some bitterness.

"Oh! that's a mere bagatelle,—the empty rattle

of a harmless drum! Don't be scared at so feeble a menace. Come down to McQuillan's this evening. In the mean time I will think over the matter for you. There are plenty of ways and means in reserve for a case like this, and we must find them. You'll be there?"

"Most likely," said the doctor, "unless called to some urgent case. We have never the full control of our time."

"You owe something to yourself as well as to your patients You are sick now, and must have attention."

Dr. Penrose, but little encouraged by this interview with Judge Gray, retired, and turned his steps homeward. For night-meetings at taverns he had little fancy; and, as far as property operations were concerned, the only one in which he was interested had caused him more trouble and mortification than he desired ever again to experience.

He said nothing to his wife at dinner-time about the unpleasant occurrences of the morning, though it did not escape her quick eyes that he was unusually depressed in spirits.

During the afternoon, the thoughts of Dr. Penrose dwelt a good deal on the intimations of Judge Gray in regard to his too great isolation of himself, and the necessity, if he would better his condition, of mingling on more intimate terms with his fellow-citizens. He saw that there was force in the judge's remarks, and felt that he stood too much

alone and too far out of the current of progressive events.

"There'll be no harm in going down to McQuillan's to-night," he thought with himself. "Perhaps something may grow out of it. Judge Gray is a man of influence, and he evidently feels an interest in my affairs. He is shrewd, and, if I act under his advice, I cannot go very wrong. I don't fancy these night-convocations: still, where men are in active business all day, evening is the only time left for intercommunication, and a public house has the advantage of a common ground of assemblage. Yes, the judge is right: I live too much within myself. I'm only a doctor, and known only as a doctor in the town. If any one falls sick, I'm sent for; and afterward I'm scarcely thought of, except when my bill goes in."

The more the doctor's mind dwelt on the subject, the clearer it became that he ought to join the judge and his friends at McQuillan's. His path was all hedged up, and only in this direction did there seem to be any way of escape. The judge had influence, felt an interest in him, and showed a particular desire to have him come down that evening.

"I'll go," was his final conclusion, "and see what comes of it. No harm can arise,—that much is certain; and good may be the result."

CHAPTER VIII.

A TRUE WIFE.

THERE were several strong points of difference between Dr. and Mrs. Penrose. In natural character and temperament they were opposites. She was hopeful and cheerful, he desponding, musing, and silent. They were very different, also, in acquired character and in mental and moral discipline. The education of Mrs. Penrose had been a religious one, that of her husband a simply moral one. All her feelings and sympathies, as well as her daily life, were on the side of religion; and her pure spirit ever looked from things natural up to things spiritual. But the doctor's mind dwelt only in this lower and visible world: it had no power to rise above the rational and the intellectual. In Providence he had no sure confidence, and never was able to see how our light afflictions here have power to work out for us "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." There was about him, in reality, less of faith than skepticism.

It had never been without a feeling of concern that Mrs. Penrose saw her husband go out into the world; for she knew that, unless the panoply of a true faith in God and a reliance upon his justice and goodness were around him, he was never secure.

His disinclination to mingle socially with his fellow men had not, therefore, been to her a cause of regret. She knew that their home-circle was his safest place, and she ever tried to render it as attractive as possible. She watched his varied moods of mind, and, with the wisdom of a true love, so bore herself toward him that her presence never disturbed, but always softened, strengthened, or sustained him. If he was desponding, she skilfully sought to lift his thoughts upward, and to help his reason, if not his perceptions, to see, in some feeble light, the truth that there was One over all, by whom the very hairs of our head are numbered. If he came home fretted by disappointment or annoyed at unpleasant occurrences in or out of his profession, she soothed him by loving attentions, or directed his thoughts to subjects of cheerful interest. Never did she suffer the sombre hue of his feelings to throw over her countenance a perceptible shade; at least, not while he was present.

It is not surprising that Mrs. Penrose had great influence over her husband, and that he loved and honored her as a true wife. Reserved as he was by nature, and inclined to silence when trouble oppressed his feelings, he rarely concealed any thing from her. If things went wrong with him, he generally communicated the facts, sure of finding in his wife a hopeful counsellor.

Evening closed in, and Dr. Penrose returned home, pondering, as he had been pondering nearly all day, the unhappy condition of his affairs. As

yet no light had dawned in upon him. He saw no way of escape from the difficulties that environed his path. This being so, he was the more strongly inclined to accept the invitation of Judge Gray. Unless help came in this direction, from whence could it come? He had thought of nearly every man in the town who had money; but there was not one upon whom, considering his present personal relations, he could call with any prospect of aid. To McQuillan's, therefore, he was resolved to go.

Up to this time he had not mentioned to his wife the refusal of Mr. Barlow to accept the deficient payment, and his threat of selling their property to satisfy his mortgage. He had hoped to be able, at the same time, to say to her that he had made arrangements for all the money that was needed to hold every thing secure. It had not escaped her quick eyes that he was suffering under an unusual depression; and she was waiting patiently for some intimation of the cause. He said nothing at tea-time of what was in his thoughts; and, not long after they had left the table, he remarked to his wife,—

"I am going out for an hour this evening."

He did not look her steadily in the face as he said this.

"Who's sick?" inquired Mrs. Penrose.

"No one; but I promised Judge Gray that I would see him this evening."

"See Judge Gray!" Mrs. Penrose failed to con-

ceal the surprise occasioned by this announcement.

"Yes. He asked me to come down to McQuillan's to-night. Several gentlemen are to be there.

"McQuillan's? I wouldn't go, dear." And Mrs. Penrose laid her hand gently on the arm of her husband, and looked tenderly, yet very earnestly, into his face.

"If you had as strong reasons for accepting the invitation as I have, I think you would go," replied the doctor, forcing a smile.

"You will not hide from *me* the reason?"

"No, certainly not. Still, it would have gratified me no little could I have saved you the anxious feelings the communication you desire must occasion."

"Oh, my husband, don't you know me better than all that?" said Mrs. Penrose. "To lighten your burdens by sharing them is one of the truest pleasures of my life. Tell me all."

Dr. Penrose drew his arm around her waist, and they walked thus down into his office. As the door shut behind them, he said,—

"Barlow refused to take the payment I offered to-day."

"He did?"

"Yes."

"On what ground?"

"It was short of the sum due, and he would have all or none."

"He means to sell our house unless the money is paid?" said Mrs. Penrose, anticipating so much of what her husband had to say.

"Such is his threat."

"Do you believe he will go to that extremity?"

"I fear we have nothing to hope from his clemency. He is a hard, selfish, cruel man, as every one in Arden knows."

"I don't believe he will put his hands on our property," said Mrs. Penrose, in a confident tone of voice.

"Why should he spare me more than another?"

"He owes you a debt of gratitude, for service rendered in his family, that his conscience will not let him disregard."

"Gratitude! Conscience!" replied the doctor. "He knows them not."

"Others of his household do, at least; and through them, I know, influence can be brought to bear upon him. He will not sell this property, depend upon it."

"And you may depend upon it he will. He was angry and dogged, and we parted in no friendly spirit: I've been trying all day to make some arrangement, but without avail. I saw Judge Gray, and he spoke very kindly and encouragingly. He said that he would himself advance the money and take the mortgage off of Barlow's hands, if he had it to spare. He blamed me a little for keeping so much aloof from the people in the town, and said that I must come into a closer personal association

with them if I desired to advance myself. Now I was only regarded as a physician. Few knew me well enough to have a friendly interest in me. As things were, he said, it was absolutely necessary for me to become better acquainted with my fellow citizens. To-night there would be a good opportunity for me to make the acquaintance of several able and influential men who were to meet him at the hotel, and I must be sure to come down. So you see that I have weighty arguments in favor of accepting his invitation."

Mrs. Penrose looked serious.

"I don't like these night-meetings at taverns," she simply remarked.

"Nor do I," said the doctor.

"I wouldn't go." Mrs. Penrose spoke firmly.

"But see how much is at stake," replied her husband.

"Not so very much." A cheerful smile lit up the countenance of Mrs. Penrose. "Our house is worth more than double what is due upon it. If Barlow persists in his purpose, how soon can he sell?"

"Not for some months."

"All will come out right, depend upon it." Mrs. Penrose spoke with such a loving confidence in her voice that her spirit was transfused into that of her husband. "Throw doubt to the winds, love!" she added. "The clouds in our sky are not thick enough to obscure the radiant sun. There is no present need of your joining Judge Gray at the tavern. Stay at home with me. I know you would rather."

"You utter but the simple truth in that," said the doctor, feelingly.

"You are my prisoner, and I will not let you go." And Mrs. Penrose twined her arms about his neck and laid her lips upon his forehead. As she desired, so it was. Her husband did not make one of the party at McQuillan's that night.

CHAPTER IX.

MORE CONTENTION.

Mr. Eldridge never used wine at his own table, and rarely drank any thing except when in company Judge Gray, on the contrary, never sat down to the dinner-table without his decanter of brandy as well as his bottle of wine.

The glass or two taken by Mr. Eldridge before dinner, added to the glass or two, or three, drank with the judge during the meal, were rather too much for the sober balance of his mind. When he left Judge Gray's house, somewhere about the middle of the afternoon, it was in a state of mental confusion, if not bodily weakness. He staggered in his thoughts, if not in his steps.

"We will see you to-night," said the judge, grasping warmly the hand of Eldridge, as the latter parted from him at his door.

"I'll be there," was answered, unhesitatingly.

"I'll have more to tell you then," said the judge. "The scheme is a splendid one."

"Dr. Penrose is going into it, you say?"

"Yes. He is among the shrewd ones of Arden, who know what is what."

"I'll be there, judge. You may depend on me."

"That's right. Come early."

And the two men shook hands with a pleased heartiness, as if they were the oldest, the best, and the most familiar, of friends.

Eldridge moved off down the street, with an expression of blank pleasure in his face and a watery twinkle in his eyes; while Judge Gray, with his brows contracting in earnest thought and the flexible roundness of his lips vanishing in hard, selfish lines, returned slowly into his house.

Business connected with his profession required Mr. Eldridge to be in his office; and he returned home immediately and set himself to work among law-books and legal papers. But confusion of mind, consequent upon a too free acceptance of Judge Gray's hospitalities, made it impossible for him to fix his attention upon the matter before him, and most of the afternoon was, consequently, passed in half-dreamy reveries, in which plans for a sudden increase of wealth mingled with troubled thoughts of home.

Toward evening the mind of Mr. Eldridge grew clearer and his feelings calmer. The bright colors in which the schemes of Judge Gray had shone with

a fascinating lustre gradually faded, and showed some features in the prospect that were to his eyes far from attractive. Were it not that he had passed his word to be at McQuillan's, he would have resolutely determined not to go. Even under this promise he hesitated in his thoughts, and seriously considered the propriety of absenting himself from the meeting that was arranged to take place at the village tavern. Some reminiscences of his previous night there did not leave the most pleasant impression on his mind; nor were all the personages he met there, who appeared to be "hand-and-glove" with the judge, just the kind of individuals whose acquaintanceship was most agreeable.

"I'm half inclined to break my word," he said, as he aroused himself from a deep reverie, and noticed that twilight was dimly falling, and the day fast retiring before night's approaching shadows. For some time the usual sounds of disorder and wrangling among the children had vexed his ears, though it had not much diverted his thoughts. But now the increasing turbulence and sharper thrill of excited voices caused him to leave his office and go toward the scene of strife. As he stepped into the passage the street door was quietly opened, and his wife, bonneted and shawled, glided in with a quick, noiseless step.

"Harriet!" he ejaculated, in sudden surprise. Mr. Eldridge was not before aware that his wife had been absent from home during the afternoon.

She stopped suddenly, with a confused air; and

even in the dusky light the deep crimson of her face was partly visible.

"I thought you were at home," said Mr. Eldridge.

"You don't always think right," was answered, in a voice of ill-disguised contempt.

"Where have you been?"

The husband's tones were far too imperative for the temper of his wife.

"Just where I pleased to go," sharply answered Mrs. Eldridge.

"You may go once too often. Take care!"

"Take care of what?"

"There are consequences in the future, it may be, of which you have not dreamed," said Mr. Eldridge, with a calmness of voice that sent a chill along the nerves of his wife. But her temper was not of the yielding quality; and no fear of consequences, seen or unseen, had power to break the iron firmness of her will.

"I'm no child to be frightened by your *bugaboos*, was sneeringly answered; "nor a superstitious weakling to tremble at any man's oracular nothings. Speak out, if you have any thing to say. What consequences?"

"Harriet!"

There was warning in the voice of Mr. Eldridge.

"Morgan!" Mrs. Eldridge mimicked his tone.

"If you visit that Mrs. Glendy again, I will ——"

He paused, the threatened consequences unspoken.

"Say on," calmly returned his wife.

"I'll—I'll ——-"

But returning self-control prevented the utterance of words that might have wrought a separation.

A little while the unhappy couple stood silently scowling upon each other; then Mr. Eldridge stepped back into his office, and his wife kept on her way to her chamber.

"Oh, foolish, foolish woman!" ejaculated the miserable husband, as he shut the door of his office. "What evil spirit is driving you madly on to ruin your own peace and that of all to whom you bear intimate relation?"

CHAPTER X.

STEPS TO RUIN.

The meeting of Mr. and Mrs. Eldridge at the supper-table was distant and formal. In one thing there was concord between them, and that was in a calm, stern repression of all turbulence among the children. Neither was in a mood to be trifled with: that the young rebels saw, and wisely forebore to draw down upon themselves certain punishment.

The few sharp words which passed between the husband and wife at their meeting a little while before had chafed the feelings of Mr. Eldridge exceedingly. The wine taken at Judge Gray's had left a portion of its inflammable qualities in his blood,

dimmed the wiser perceptions of his mind, and weakened his self-control. It was remarkable how, under the circumstances, he had managed to guard himself in his exciting interview with his fretted companion on meeting her in the passage a little while before.

A multitude of thoughts crowded through the mind of Mr. Eldridge as he sat at the tea-table, feigning to eat rather than really partaking of food. Several times words formed themselves in his mind, and were about leaping into impulsive expressions, when he checked the purpose to speak and bit his lips in forced silence.

Mrs. Eldridge showed no inclination to let her thoughts pass beyond her own keeping.

The meal ended, husband and wife retired,—one to his office and the other to her own apartment.

"Shall I go, or not?" This was the mental inquiry of Eldridge as he seated himself in his office-chair. A long time he held the question in even debate. One word from a loving wife, one glance from her tender eyes, one smile from her lips, would have ended the contest. All the attractive features of Judge Gray's proposals would have changed instantly, by contrast, into what was repulsive. But he had no guardian-angel to walk by his side through the world. He stood solitary in his conflict, repulsed from his own fireside,—driven out to meet temptation, instead of being held back from danger by the strong hand of love.

An hour after leaving the tea-table, we find him

amid a company of five well-known personages in Arden, seated around a table in a private room at McQuillan's tavern, on which are glasses, wine, brandy, cigars, and a quire of writing-paper, with pens and ink. Judge Gray occupied a seat at the table, and was, as could be seen at a glance, the leading spirit of the party. Dr. Penrose was not there. His absence seemed particularly to be regretted by the judge, who had promised him to the company and was still confident that he would make his appearance.

The first business in order was the examination of a scheme for making a large sum of money, which the judge had proposed, and which he now laid before the company in detail. An extensive tract of land, on the north side of the town, lay just at the terminus of a projected railroad from the capital of the State to Arden, and thence through a wealthy district of country to the main line of railroads leading to Atlantic cities. This tract of land was to be purchased from the present owner, who was ignorant of the railroad schemes, and therefore ignorant of the prospective value of his land.

"Forty dollars an acre will buy this piece of land,' said the judge, confidently. "It is not good for much as farming-soil, but will yield a golden harvest a few years hence, when cropped with houses and manufactories, as it surely will be."

"How many acres does it contain?" asked Eldridge.

"Six hundred."

"It will cost twenty-four thousand dollars."

"Yes. But liberal time can be secured; and, long before half the payments are due, the sale of one-sixth of the land will meet the whole liability."

"Will this railroad ever be constructed?" was inquired.

"In less than two years you will hear the locomotive's scream every hour in Arden," confidently replied the judge. "I know, intimately, the men who have taken the matter in hand. They own thousands of acres on the projected line, and wield almost unlimited influence in our legislature. The charter is already drawn, leading capitalists are already pledged for half the stock, and the governor's word is passed to sign the bill. I had letters from friends at the capital yesterday, which give positive assurance that in less than a month the charter will be a legal instrument and the route put under survey."

"The engineers may designate a route that will not include Arden in the benefits of the road," said Mr. Eldridge.

"No danger of that. We are on the air-line."

"Powerful local interests may bend the line," remarked Eldridge.

"Not away from Arden. I know all the interests at stake, and am so confident that the road will be here in less than twenty-four months that I shall risk all I am worth in property speculations. Send that bottle along, Craig."

The individual addressed in the last sentence was

engaged in cutting the cork of a champagne-bottle, the "pop" of which was just then heard. All the glasses around the table were filled, and all drank to the sentiment of Judge Gray:—"The new times in Arden."

Before the exhilarating influences of this bottle had subsided, the individuals present resolved themselves into a land association, with Judge Gray as president and Eldridge as secretary, and voted to purchase the tract of six hundred acres just referred to.

"We'll put you down for a hundred acres?" said Judge Gray, addressing Eldridge.

"Thank you, judge," returned the lawyer; "but you are far too liberal. Twenty acres will come up to my ability."

"Nonsense! I'll write down a hundred. Why, man, you don't know on which side your bread is buttered! As secretary of our association, your interests should at least be half of mine; and I want two hundred acres. Say a hundred!" And the judge leaned over toward Eldridge, and spoke in a lower tone:—"Say a hundred. If it should crowd ou I'll take the purchase off of your hands."

"Very well; put me down for a hundred acres," replied Eldridge, into whose head the champagne-fumes were rising.

The remaining three hundred were distributed between the balance of the company, in portions of fifty acres each. A few formal rules and regulations for the government of the company were next

adopted; and then, after an idle half-hour devoted to smoking, drinking, and political disquisitions, a couple of packs of cards were thrown upon the table, as the signal for a new diversion.

"You must excuse me," said Eldridge, rising, and making a movement to leave the table. Confused as his thoughts were by the liquor he had taken, the better principles by which his conduct in life had been governed were shocked at the sight of cards introduced under the circumstances.

"You are the last man to be excused to-night," said Judge Gray, imperatively, yet in a pleasant way, as he laid his hand upon the arm of Eldridge and forced him back into his chair. The latter had little power of resistance left, and so yielded to the force of a stronger will.

It was midnight when Eldridge found his way home, none the happier for the evening's deeds and experiences. He was neither a wiser nor a better man. From the safe path in which he had thus far trodden with a manly sense of rectitude he had stepped aside, and, in doing so, had become conscious of the instant presence of an evil-alluring power, against the force of which human strength was little more than weakness. He had not only played at cards for money, but had been the winner by over a hundred dollars at one time during the evening and been greatly elated at the result. He did not come away in so good a condition pecuniarily, having lost these winnings and over two

hundred dollars besides, for which the man Craig held his obligation as a "debt of honor."

All was silent within, as Eldridge groped his way along the dark passage and up the stairs. In passing the sitting-room, a thin ray of light glanced through a slight crevice in the door, and he opened it and stepped into the apartment. The lamp was just dying out; but there was light enough to show him his wife sitting asleep in an easy-chair, and upon the table a decanter and three wine-glasses, with remains of fruit and cake. She had not spent the evening alone. But who were her visitors?

The thought and inquiry, after the occurrences of the previous day, stung the mind of Eldridge into vague suspicion. A few moments he stood, silently gazing upon his unconscious wife, and then left the room with noiseless steps, and went to his chamber. She never knew at what hour he came home that night, nor did he know when she awoke in the dark sitting-room and groped her way to their chamber; for touching the events of the evening neither made inquiry of the other.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TEMPTER.

More reserved and formal than on the previous evening was the intercourse of Mr. and Mrs. Eldridge when they met at the breakfast-table. They scarcely looked into each other's faces, even while uttering the few brief sentences that passed their lips; and each felt relieved when the meal was over.

As for Mr. Eldridge, his thoughts, usually so clear, were now in a maze. Nothing upon which he looked presented the usual aspect. Suddenly he had become changed, or all things had assumed new relations. He went into his office and made a formal effort to take up the business of the day. He had cases on hand requiring a clear head and the most earnest concentration of thought, and he tried to think about them; but thought wandered off in other directions, truant to duty.

How could it be otherwise, after the occurrences of the previous day and evening? For nearly half an hour he strove with himself, trying to gather up the broken threads of interest in the cases referred to; then, pushing the papers aside with a kind of desperate movement, he started up from the table at which he was seated, muttering to himself,—

"The fiend take all law for the present!"

He moved about the room uneasily for several minutes. Then he sat down again, with his mind all absorbed in other subjects. The gaming-debt to Craig and the conduct of his wife were sources of trouble not unmingled with feelings of humiliation; but the hope inspired by Judge Gray's confident predictions in regard to the future value of the land in which he was to be a large shareholder lifted his feelings into a pleasanter region. He saw the railroad in progress and rapidly extending its iron bands toward Arden. The thunder of the locomotive was in his ears, the jars of its vigorous motion thrilling along every nerve. Where now the old mill lifted its brown roof in the sluggish air, and the lazy wheel glistened in the sunshine that made rainbows of hope above and around it, arose before his vision long ranges of stores; and away over the fields, now waving with grain or dark with forest-trees, he saw stately dwellings springing up as if by magic. And in all these tokens of wealth and prosperity he had a liberal share.

How dull and plodding seemed the way along which the lawyer had come thus far in life! The fees of his profession looked small, even to the stirring of contempt, when he counted their slow aggregation and viewed them in connection with his newly-inspired ambition. There was a shorter and more royal road to wealth; and, thanks to a good fortune, he had discovered the way at last.

With such fancies he dallied until all interest in the cases that demanded his present and most earnest

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thought was gone, and he folded up the papers on his table and returned them to the repositories from which they had been taken a little while earlier. It was yet an hour before court opened. With no defined purpose in his thought, he went forth; and yet, as if by instinct, he moved away in the direction of the old mill property, in which lay hidden a mine of wealth whose existence was only known to a select few in Arden. As he walked along, there came to him a vivid remembrance of his gaming-debt to Craig. He had not really forgotten it; but another and more inspiring subject had dimmed it over for a little while. With the remembrance came a feeling of contempt for the man whom he had always regarded as inferior to himself in all respects, mingled with a slight sense of mortification at having been the loser in a contest with one in so few respects his equal.

"There will have to be another trial of skill," he thought, rather than uttered. How reluctantly did his mind come to this conclusion!—yet scarcely was it formed ere the man to whom it referred was seen a little way in advance. Eldridge quickened his steps, and was in a few moments by his side. Their greetings were brief and not over-cordial, and both seemed a little embarrassed. Craig was the first to gain entire self-possession.

"I don't think you were just yourself last night," said he, after a few commonplace words had passed between them. "You are really a better player than

I am. Our new speculations must have bewildered you."

"Of course," replied Eldridge, "I cannot say that I am satisfied either with the result or myself. I am no professional card-player; yet I have some skill in that direction."

"Luck only was against you," answered Craig, smiling. "I had no hope of coming out the winner, and shall be rather chary of another contest."

"It will most probably have to come," said Eldridge; "for I am not the man to give up in any struggle. Pride, if no other influence, ever quickens me to renewed effort. I think we shall try it again."

"I'm not ambitious for a new encounter," returned Craig. "'Let well enough alone' is one of my mottoes. Still, as you are the loser, a principle of honor will not permit me to refuse another trial."

"When shall it be?" inquired Eldridge, whose thoughts were now all interested in a new and dangerous direction.

"I am always at your service," was the prompt answer. "Will you be at McQuillan's to-night?"

"Yes."

"So will I. There can be no better time or place."

The two men walked on for a few rods in silence.

"Are you particularly engaged this morning?" inquired Eldridge.

"No. Why do you ask?" The question was put with seeming indifference.

Some moments passed before the lawyer replied. Then he said,—

"I'm a little too eager at times. But it is my temperament. I strike while the iron is hot:—sometimes well, sometimes wide of the mark. Still, I must strike: it's my nature."

"Prompt men are the world's benefactors," said Craig, sententiously.

"True in a certain sense. Yet they often mar their fortunes by a single hurried stroke of bad policy. But I won't moralize. What I was going to say is this:—I don't just like waiting for that renewed trial of skill until this evening. Why not let it come now? I'm at your service."

"And I at yours," replied Craig, with a heartiness of tone that betrayed the pleasure he felt at the challenge.

"When shall it be?" asked Eldridge.

"Perhaps," said Craig, "you have a case in court this morning?"

"None that will suffer by my absence. No; I must get this little matter off my thoughts first. I'm a peculiar man, you see, and can't wait when I get very earnest on any subject. My purposes never linger. I strike, as I said before, while the iron i hot."

"Suppose," said Craig, "we ride out to Newton's? I have a horse and wagon at Green's stables."

"That will do," was promptly answered.

"Where shall I call for you?"

"Nowhere. I'll walk round to the stables with you."

"Very well," was uttered, low down in the throat

of Craig, over whose usually-pleasant, half-indolent, aimless countenance an observer could have seen the passage of a singular change. No one who studied the lines of that countenance now would have said that he was an aimless man, or one without a vigorous purpose. He partly averted his face, as if aware that his real character was revealing itself.

The steps of the two men were visibly accelerated as they walked on in the direction of Green's stables. A little while Craig was silent; then he seemed to force himself to speak, (and he did act under self-compulsion,) referring, in a kind of absent way, to the railroad project discussed on the previous evening, and to the fortunes it would make for a certain favored few in Arden the moment it became a law. To this Eldridge responded in words,—not in thoughts. The latter were now too deeply interested in another subject.

At the stable Eldridge was left alone for some minutes, while Craig conferred with the hostler and got all things ready for the drive. The recollection, during that short period, of certain matters of business to which he had promised to give attention that morning, caused him to waver; and, when the horse and wagon was driven out, he said, in a hesitating manner, to Craig,—

"I'm really afraid, now, that I cannot go with you this morning. I had forgotten a case that will certainly be reached on the docket; and when it is reached I must be in court."

"Just as you please," was pleasantly, almost indifferently, answered. "Any time will suit me. I'm on the safe side:—all right, you know." And he glanced at Eldridge from the corners of his eyes with a tantalizing leer. "'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush' is an old, safe motto. Having the bird in the hand, I shall not trouble myself about the two hopping in the bush:—eh?"

Eldridge stood irresolute for some moments, his eyes cast upon the ground. His business duties were claiming his attention on one side, and strongly urging him to return to his office and make the needed preparation to go into court; on the other side, the desire to recover from Craig the two hundred dollars lost to him on the previous evening was so earnest that resistance seemed almost impossible. The entire indifference manifested by Craig at this stage of affairs rather favored his inclinings; for it was conclusive that the winner of the night before had no very strong confidence in the result of another trial under different circumstances.

"I can't afford to lose two hundred dollars." Thus Eldridge talked, hurriedly, with himself, as he still stood looking upon the ground. "Last night my head was confused by Judge Gray's champagne; it is clear now. The odds were against me last night; they are in my favor now. Two hundred dollars are not to be made every day;—not, certainly, to-day, in court. If the case goes against my client the loss to him won't be much. I can pay him for what he

loses by my absence from court, and still call the morning's business a good one."

"I'll go with you," he said, looking up from the ground, while a light flashed over his countenance.

"Jump in, then," answered Craig, who showed neither surprise nor pleasure at the lawyer's decision. A moment after, and the fleet horse bounded away; and soon the two men left Arden far behind them.

CHAPTER XII.

SUSPICION AWAKENED.

It was late in the afternoon when they returned to Arden. Very different was their appearance in aspect and carriage as they rode into the town. Craig sat erect, calm, self-possessed; while Eldridge was almost crouching at his side, his eyes fixed on the ground, the lines of his face all relaxed, and his hands grasping the seat and side of the buggy, like one who felt himself insecure.

"Shall I drive to your office?" inquired the former, in an even, courteous voice, as they entered the outskirts of the village.

"No! no!" was replied, with a sudden, nervous start. "Leave me at the stable; I'll walk home from there."

Craig drew upon one rein, and the vehicle swept around from the main street.

"Shall we see you at McQuillan's to-night?" inquired Craig, in a soft, inviting tone, as Eldridge stepped from the buggy a few moments afterward.

"No," was the emphatic answer.

"The judge will expect you," said the other, in the same pleasant, insinuating voice.

"He won't see me if he does," was answered, almost rudely. "I shall remain at home to-night."

"You are secretary of the Land Company, remember," suggested the tempter. "Last night's meeting was only a preliminary one. Some things of importance are to be done this evening."

"I can't help it. You and the judge, and the rest of you, must do these things to suit yourselves. I shall not be there."

"You'll think better of it after tea; particularly when Judge Gray calls around for you, as he certainly will when I inform him that you do not intend being at your post. He'll not consent to the secretary's absence, unless there be life and death in the case."

"The secretary can resign,—and will, if need be," said Eldridge, gruffly.

"He'll do no such thing," was smilingly answered. "Come, brighten up, my friend. It is always darkest just before daylight. Don't look as if you'd lost every thing worth having in the world, when so light a thing as the turning up of a card may give you, some day, a fortune. You are about the hardest customer I've met with in a year, and more than a

match for me. I'm only indebted to a run of good luck for my present advantage."

"Good-evening!" said Eldridge, in a half-angry, half-contemptuous manner, as he turned off rudely from his companion.

"Good-evening," returned Craig, in a voice the most courteous imaginable. As the lawyer went plunging away in an unsteady, desperate kind of pace, Craig stood gazing after him with a sinister expression of countenance.

"I'm not done yet, friend Eldridge," he muttered, the parting lips showing his white teeth, that glistened like the fangs of some beast of prey. "Men of your temperament are just the game. We have to play you the line right freely; but, the bait once taken, as it now is, and we are sure to bring you to land. Won't be at McQuillan's? We'll see about that!"

Nearly eight hours had passed since Eldridge left his home in the morning:—eight hours, most of which had glided by like so many minutes; eight hours, nearly all of which had been spent in the eager excitement of play. The result has been guessed by the reader. Instead of winning back his two hundred dollars, Eldridge is the further loser of seven hundred; and, worse than that, the loser, in an equal ratio, of conscience and principle. When cards were introduced on the night before at McQuillan's, his moral sense experienced a shock. No ethical question now intruded itself. It was simply the relation of loss and gain. He had tried

as eagerly as any professional card-player to get the money of his opponent, and experienced a real pleasure in the thought of not only recovering his own but winning a handsome sum from his antagonist; and now he suffered more from the thought of having lost in the contest than from any troubled sense of wrong-doing. His wily adversary had not failed to take more than one advantage over him. The first and leading one, and that which made all the rest easy, was to induce him to drink a glass of mixed brandy on their arrival at Newton's tavern. Eldridge saw not the telegraphic glances that passed between Craig and the bar-keeper, and never for an instant suspected the truth that, while his glass was doubly strengthened with fourth-proof brandy, that of his companion was scarcely colored with the fiery liquor.

The contest between the two men had not been an equal one by any means. Even with a fair antagonist Eldridge did not stand on even ground; for his mind, for most of the day, was beclouded from the cause just alleged, while that of his adversary was clear from the beginning. He was not, therefore, in a condition to detect the numerous little frauds passed upon him with the stealthy art of a professional gambler,—frauds that told fatally in the result of almost every game.

As Eldridge moved along in the direction of his home, he felt like one breathing in a stifling atmosphere. He had never experienced sensations like those now oppressing him. The very earth seemed

unsteady beneath his feet. He hurried on, eager to reach his own door and pass within to a place of safety,—eager to hide from observation that he might hold with himself undisturbed intercourse.

Love of home was a strong peculiarity in the mind of Mr. Eldridge; and, with all the uninviting features of his domestic life, thought and feeling ever turned homeward, and the more earnestly if any trouble assailed him. In early manhood, and before his marriage, what lovely pictures of home-joys and home-comforts did imagination draw! The cheerful hearth-fire, the pictured room, and the loving, tender, true-hearted life-companion,—how often were these represented, and how fondly dwelt upon! Honor, gain, ambition, held up their emblazoned shields before him; but their glitter could not win his eyes from this picture nor dim its exceeding brightness. And when, lured by external attractions that concealed much of her real quality, he selected from among the maidens one to share with him the good and evil of life, his happy eyes looked with a new delight on the prospective home, and the fair form that made it a real paradise had no longer a shadowy face, but the sweet, loving countenance of his chosen.

The power of a woman over such a man is almost unlimited. She will be his good angel, leading him through home-affections safely on his way through this world and upward to the world of eternal felicity, or she will be an evil spirit, to fret and chafe and mar the good and beautiful within his soul,

and, perchance, drag him down to the habitations of endless wretchedness. If she be loving, true, and unselfish, she will be the angel of his home; if fretful, hasty, unsympathizing, selfish, the evil spirit of his household,—wretched herself, and making all unhappy around her.

An error like that just committed by Eldridge never would have been made if all had been right at home. No temptation would have been strong enough to lure him away from that haven of peace and safety. And now, when the threshold of his dwelling was crossed and the door shut behind him, he felt a sense of relief, and the awakening of truer, better thoughts and purposes than any he had experienced for hours.

If ever in his life Eldridge needed the tender, soothing ministrations of a loving spirit, it was on this particular occasion. If ever true home-attractions were needed to hold a man back from the path of danger into which his feet had almost unwittingly strayed, it was now. Strongly disturbed was the equilibrium of his moral life; the even balance was trembling,—the preponderance ready to bear down the side of evil and throw the scale of virtue upward toward the beam.

It was perhaps an hour before the evening twilight when Mr. Eldridge entered his home and passed hurriedly into his office. He sat down at his table, on which lay, undisturbed, the books and papers left there in the morning, and, leaning his arms thereon, bent down and hid his face, breathing

out, as he did so, a sigh that was full of anguish. Thus alone, thought took up naturally a hurried review of the day's doings. Gradually the excitement of his feelings was calmed down, and, in a state of clearer rationality, he conned over the whole series of actions from the time he left home until his present return. The result was self-condemnation and a clear conviction that he had not been fairly dealt by. The character of the man with whom he had passed the day showed itself in a new aspect; and sundry questions with regard to him, which he had often asked of himself in times past, were now partially answered.

"There's something clearly wrong," he said to himself, as thought went out in this new direction. "Craig is not what I have supposed him to be. He wears a face that does not reflect his heart. Yet he is on the best of terms with Judge Gray, and is constantly referring to him. Can it be that they are but jackal and lion?"

This thought visibly excited Mr. Eldridge. It was a new suspicion thrown into his mind, and one that he made an effort to cast out.

"No! no!" he said, aloud, as he started up with a disturbed manner; "that is impossible. Judge Gray is a man of honor, with all his social peculiarities. The thought, even, is a great wrong. I will not give it place in my mind for a single moment."

Still, he could not turn wholly aside from the conviction; and his mind kept recurring back to it in spite of his efforts to think in a new direction,

and questions like the following would intrude themselves:—

"He certainly has shown a very particular interest in me all at once. What is the meaning of it? What personal or social sympathy can exist between him and a man like Craig? and yet they are known to be much together. I can't understand it!"

Thought continued busy for a time longer, and questions touching his future action toward these two men were earnestly debated. The conclusions of his judgment at length found utterance in the words,—

"Enough for me that there is danger in the association. It must not, shall not, be continued. There is, I fear, something not right behind these land schemes. I do not fancy the wine-and-brandy part of the business arrangements, and particularly object to the cards. Prospectively, I am already thousands of dollars richer than I was; really, hundreds of dollars poorer. I have made large gains in an imagined future, but have lost seriously in the real present. Morgan Eldridge, stop! Take not a single step further in this direction. Meet the evil already sustained, and then turn away from temptation!"

Thus spoke out, with emphasis, the man's just convictions. His mind was growing clearer, his feelings calmer, and judgment was rising into a true ascendency.

"I will not go to McQuillan's this evening!" he said, resolutely. "Let them manage affairs in their

own way. If all is right about the land speculation, Judge Gray is shrewd enough to take care of his own interests in the matter; and if his are secured mine must be also. It will be easy enough for me to keep posted up in the doings of the association."

"But you are the secretary," came suggestively into his mind.

"I will send in my resignation to-morrow," was answered to himself.

Eldridge was entirely in earnest. He meant to absent himself from the meeting to take place on that evening, and he meant to have nothing more to do actively with the land organization. There was danger for him in this new path into which his feet had wandered, and he was resolute in his purpose at once to turn aside therefrom.

CHAPTER XIII.

A SAD AFFLICTION.

So busy had Mr. Eldridge been with his own thoughts, that, even though half an hour since his return home had elapsed, he had not observed the unusual stillness that reigned through the house. Gradually he became aware of the fact, as, by a natural transition, his consciousness took a new direction, and he listened for something to indicate the presence of his family. But neither voices nor

the sound of footsteps, far and faint even, reached his ears.

"This is singular," he said to himself; and he went to the door of his office, and stood hearkening for almost the space of a minute. Once or twice he started slightly, as a real or imagined sound, like the moan of some one in pain, swept by his straining sense.

Mr. Eldridge held his breath, until he could hear his own heart beating loudly and feel its labored throbbings against his side. A sudden foreboding of evil oppressed him. From his office he stepped into the passage, still listening, and walked to the stairway. As he stood there, hearkening still, the same low, smothered voice of suffering was heard; but from what direction it came was not apparent.

"Harriet!" he called, in suppressed tones.

Up through the passages he heard the sound of his voice go echoing with a strangely-hollow murmur, as if through deserted halls. For a moment or two he listened, and then sprung with a quick bound up the stairs; for he heard distinctly, though in a very low and smothered voice, the word—

"Father!"

"Harriet!" he called again.

"Father! father!"

It was the voice of little Katy, faint yet eager, and full of suffering and fear.

"Where are you, child?" called Mr. Eldridge, whose bewildered sense did not make out the direction from which the sound came.

"Father! oh, father, come!"

The voice was almost by his side. He glanced just within the door of his own chamber, and there, upon the floor, lay Katy, her body drawn together, her face pale as ashes and distorted by suffering, and her large dark eyes looking up at him with an expression of blended hope and anguish. She made not the slightest movement to rise.

"Katy! Katy! What ails you?"

Mr. Eldridge bent down over the prostrate child and laid his hand upon her forehead. It was cold and clammy.

"Oh, father! father!" Tears gushed from her eyes. But still she lay in that unnatural position,—and lay perfectly motionless.

Mr. Eldridge took hold of one arm and drew it up. The movement was answered by a quick, sharp cry of pain, and the words,—

"Oh, don't, father! don't!"

"What ails you, Katy? Where are you hurt?" anxiously inquired Mr. Eldridge.

"William shook me out of the pear-tree," she answered, the tears still streaming over her face.

"Where is your mother?"

"I don't know."

"Was she at home when you were hurt?"

"No, sir."

"Where is William?"

"I don't know. He ran away when I fell."

"Are you very badly hurt?"

"Oh, father, father!"

The voice itself, no longer sharp and loud, but low and wailing, answered the question too truly.

"Let me raise you upon the bed," said Mr. Eldridge, making a motion to draw his hands beneath her.

"Don't, father! Oh, don't touch me!" she cried, fearfully.

"You can't lie upon the floor in this way, Katy."

"Don't! don't! don't! Oh! oh! oh! Father!"

Mr. Eldridge had passed his hands under her, and was lifting her upon the bed. The movement produced such pain that she uttered a single shriek, so wild and full of anguish that it made the father's blood curdle around his heart. When he had laid her upon the soft bed and raised himself up so that he could look into her face, he saw a deathlike countenance. The suffering of the moment had proved more than nature could bear.

"Katy!" he called to her.

But she heard him not.

"Katy! My child!"

He might as well have spoken to the wind. Close to her lips he next bent his ear; but there came not the faintest sound of breathing. He fixed his eyes sharply upon her neck and breast; but every line and fibre was motionless as stone.

For a little while Mr. Eldridge was too greatly alarmed and excited to see clearly what to do. The first impression on his mind was that Katy's life had given out with the wild scream of pain that still rung in his ears and thrilled along his nerves. A

few moments he stood over her in anguish; then he went out into the passage, and called, first the name of his wife, then that of the servant, and then, in succession, the names of his two boys. But there returned to him no answer but the echoes of his own voice. It was plain that he was alone in the house with his dead, or, it might be, dying, child.

"Katy! Katy!" he called, wringing his hands in anguish, as he returned to the chamber and once more stood over the inanimate form of the little girl, into whose white face there had not come back a single trace of feeling.

A thought of the doctor caused him to leave the chamber quickly and hurry down-stairs. "If she should come to herself before I get back?" The suggestion arrested his feet for an instant; but only for an instant. If help was obtained at all it must be through the physician, and the quicker his aid could be secured the better.

Mr. Eldridge threw open the door, and glanced eagerly up and down for some one who would bear a message to the doctor. No one appearing, he was about starting off himself, when Dr. Penrose came in sight, a short distance away, at a crossing.

The loud call of Mr. Eldridge reached his ears; and the eager, beckoning hand that suddenly cut the air with quick motions caused him to hasten his steps and change their direction.

"Oh, doctor! come up quickly!" urged Mr. Eldridge, as soon as Dr. Penrose had reached him

within a few paces; and he turned into the house. Dr. Penrose followed him in silence.

"Is she dead?" was the father's anxious query, as they reached the bedside and stood looking upon the ashen face of Katy.

Dr. Penrose bent his ear close down to the mouth of the child and listened for a few moments. Then he bared her breast and laid his hand over her heart.

"What is the cause of this?" inquired the doctor, turning with a serious face to Mr. Eldridge.

"I found her," was answered, "only a few minutes ago, lying upon the floor in this room and moaning in pain. As I lifted her in my arms to lay her upon the bed, she gave a wild scream and fainted."

"Do you know nothing more?" asked the doctor.

"She told me, before I tried to raise her up, that she had fallen from the pear-tree."

"Where is she hurt?"

"I cannot tell. She appears to have crept upstairs after her fall; but she did not move herself on the floor when I came in."

The doctor passed his hand under her clothing and felt carefully along her limbs and body.

"Is she dead?" asked Mr. Eldridge, hoarsely, as the doctor was silently making the examination.

"I think not: only suspended vital action," was briefly returned.

"Something wrong here," he said, a moment or two after replying to the father's question.

"Wrong where?" was inquired.

"About the spine."

"Oh, doctor!" ejaculated Mr. Eldridge, before whose mind was at once presented the sad image of a hopelessly-deformed child; "her back is not broken? Don't say that, Dr. Penrose!—don't say that!"

"I can say nothing positively," was answered, in a low, serious voice. "But the injury is here; (touching the spine.) "See how largely this vertebra protrudes beyond the others."

"Poor, poor child!" murmured the father, as he turned his face away.

"Where is Mrs. Eldridge?" asked the doctor. "Will you call her?"

"She is not at home," replied Mr. Eldridge.

"Then you had better send for her immediately, if you have not already done so."

"I do not know where to send," returned Mr. Eldridge, in a perplexed voice.

"She was at Mrs. Glendy's about three o'clock," said the doctor. "I saw her and Mrs. Weakly going in as I passed."

"What?—there?" ejaculated Mr. Eldridge, to whom the intelligence came with a new shock of pain.

"Yes; I am certain of it," replied the doctor. "Suppose you send one of your boys there with a message for her to come home immediately?"

"Neither of them are here. But I can go myself. You will stay until my return?"

"Be as quick as possible."

Mr. Eldridge left the room, and was half-way down-stairs, when the doctor called to him, and said,—

"Stop at my house in passing, and say to Mrs. Penrose that I want her here immediately. Tell her not to delay a single moment, but to come at once."

"Thank you, doctor. I will do so."

And Mr. Eldridge hurried away. Mrs. Penrose on receiving the message from her husband, and learning in a few words from Mr. Eldridge on what account she was wanted, left for her neighbor's house without stopping to make the slightest change or addition to her dress, while Mr. Eldridge kept on toward the residence of Mrs. Glendy.

"Is Mrs. Eldridge here?" he asked of the servant who came to the door.

"I don't know, sir," was replied, in what seemed to him a tone of evasion.

"Will you see?" Mr. Eldridge spoke in a firm, imperative voice, that made its impression on the servant.

"Yes, sir," she answered, and went back into the house. She was gone for so long a time that Mr. Eldridge was about laying his hand again upon the knocker, when he saw her coming slowly down the stairway. In his eagerness to get her answer he stepped within the door and moved a few paces down the hall.

"Is Mrs. Eldridge here?" He spoke so loud that

the sound of his voice went ringing through the house.

"No, sir; she is not here," replied the girl.

There was something in her manner that left strong doubt on the mind of Mr. Eldridge.

"Is Mrs. Glendy at home?"

The girl stammered out a negative.

"Are you sure?"

He did not really hear her answer; for, before it was made, the murmur of suppressed voices sounded distinctly from an adjoining room. Mr. Eldridge was in no state of mind to weigh nice proprieties of action or to pay any regard to the ordinary rules of social etiquette. He was satisfied, from the manner of the girl, that his wife was in the house; and the necessity of finding her at once overruled all other considerations. Not an instant did he hesitate, but moved across to the door of the room from which the voices came, and swung it open. Three persons were revealed within; but neither of them proved to be Mrs. Eldridge. There were Mrs. Glendy, Mrs. Weakly, and a man well known in Arden, but not by any means of fair reputation. They were seated at a table, on which were cards. A vacant chair pushed back from the table plainly showed the recent presence of a fourth member of the party. But Mr. Eldridge had stronger evidence than this, in the fact that he saw a portion of a lady's dress vanishing through the door as he entered.

"Sir!" With this simple ejaculation, uttered in the tone of one who felt herself outraged by an un-

warrantable intrusion, Mrs. Glendy greeted the abrupt entrance of Mr. Eldridge. She arose as she spoke, and looked angrily at her unwelcome visitor.

"Is my wife here?" inquired Mr. Eldridge, in a stern, imperative way.

"You can answer that question for yourself." And Mrs. Glendy threw her eyes around the apartment.

"She is not in this room. I can see that. Is she in the house?"

"I never answer any but gentlemanly interrogations!" retorted Mrs. Glendy.

"Pardon my rudeness," said Mr. Eldridge, repressing the strong excitement under which he was laboring, and lowering his voice to a more respectful tone. "There has been a sad accident at home, and I am in search of my wife. Dr. Penrose informed me that he saw her here this afternoon."

"She *was* here," replied Mrs. Glendy, her offended manner at once changing, "but left a short time since. What has happened, sir?"

"Our little Kate has had a fall, and is in a dreadful condition," replied Mr. Eldridge.

"Where is she injured?" inquired Mrs. Weakly, evincing a lively concern, and stepping close up to where Mr. Eldridge stood.

"About the spine, I believe. She is now insensible. I found her all alone in the house, lying upon the floor, unable to move. Do you think my wife is at your house, Mrs. Weakly?"

"She may be, but it is doubtful. Who is with your Kate?"

"Dr. Penrose and his wife."

Mr. Eldridge stepped back from the room as he replied, adding, as he was turning away,—

"I must hurry home. Should you see my wife, tell her not to delay an instant. If either of you know where she is, in heaven's name send to her quickly."

With these words, Mr. Eldridge left the startled inmates of the room and glided from the house. As he gained the street and turned his eyes in the direction of his home, he saw his wife a short distance in advance, running wildly along the pavement.

There was no longer any doubt of her presence at Mrs. Glendy's at the time of his entrance, nor of her having heard him tell of the dreadful accident which had befallen Katy. A new pang shot through his heart, and an audible groan passed his lips.

"Unhappy wife and mother!" he said, aloud; then, with more bitterness of feeling, added, "Wretched woman! You have taken one step too far! Right actions need no veil of falsehood; virtuous companionship no mantle of concealment. Gracious heavens! has it come to this already!"

Mr. Eldridge clasped his hands together in bitter anguish of spirit, then strode forward at a more rapid pace in the direction of home.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SELFISH MOTHER.

At the bedside of poor Katy Mr. Eldridge found his wife weeping and wringing her hands, and filling the house with unavailing cries. Mrs. Penrose was ministering, as best she could, to the little sufferer, now restored to consciousness, and free, in a measure, from pain.

"Don't cry so, mother!" he heard Katy say, as he entered the room.

"Oh, dear! dear! that I should have a broken-backed child!" sobbed Mrs. Eldridge, unheeding the words of her injured little one. "Oh, dear! dear!"

"Calm yourself, Mrs. Eldridge," said Mrs. Penrose, in a low, firm tone. "Summon all your self-possession."

"Where is the doctor? I thought he was here."

"He has gone home for some bandages, but will be back in a moment."

"Oh, dear! he stays a long time! Hadn't you better go for him, Mr. Eldridge?"

But Mr. Eldridge didn't even look toward his wife.

"Oh! oh! oh! It's dreadful!" sobbed Mrs. El

dridge. "Dreadful! dreadful! Does the doctor really think her back is broken?"

"My dear madam," said Mrs. Penrose, drawing Mrs. Eldridge away from the bed, and speaking in her ear, "for the sake of your poor child, calm yourself; and, for her sake, do not again refer to the nature of the injury she may have sustained."

"But does the doctor really think that her back s broken, Mrs. Penrose?"

"The spine is seriously injured."

"Oh, dear!" And Mrs. Eldridge sobbed and wrung her hands. "Oh, dear! Of all things in the world to have a hunchbacked child, and she a daughter. I'd rather a thousand times see her in her grave!"

"Mrs. Eldridge!" Surprise and rebuke were blended in the tones of Mrs. Penrose.

"It's true, Mrs. Penrose. Oh, dear! It will kill me!"

"Think of your child, madam, not of yourself," said the doctor's wife, almost sternly.

"Oh, I can't think of any thing but a cripple in the family, and she a daughter! Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

Much as Mrs. Penrose sought to check these utterances of the selfish mother, that were loud enough to reach the ears of Katy, she was unable to do so. The child heard and understood every word, and they brought to her shrinking heart the first sad intimations of a future that would be full of neglect, wrong, and suffering. She had seen a broken-backed little girl once; and the image of her de-

formed body and shrunken, unlovely face was as distinct to her mind now as when she first looked on the poor unfortunate. But few emotions of pity were excited within her at the time. She had felt more of disgust than sympathy; and she distinctly remembered how she had shrunk away from the child and felt as if she would on no account have touched her. Tears fell over her cheeks; but they were from a fountain never touched before,—a fountain very far down in her young spirit, and hidden until now.

"Poor child!" sobbed the mother, touched momentarily with a true sympathy for her little one, and bending over and laying her cheek against her wet face; "poor, poor child!"

At this moment Dr. Penrose re-entered the chamber. As soon as Mrs. Eldridge saw him she turned away from the bed, and came a few steps, saying, in a voice of peculiar distress,—

"Oh, doctor!—doctor! Isn't this terrible? But don't tell me her back is broken!"

"Hush!" returned Dr. Penrose, in a low, cautioning whisper; and he raised his finger to his lips.

"Any thing but that, doctor! I can bear any thing but that!" sobbed the mother.

"Madam!" (Dr. Penrose knit his brows and looked at her sternly,) "I must enjoin calmness and silence."

"But, doctor, how can I be calm and silent? Do you think I have no feelings? I am not made of stone."

"If you please!" said the doctor, stepping past the excited woman, and moving her aside with his hand as he did so.

"How do you feel now, dear?" He spoke to Katy in a low, tender, encouraging voice.

"Better," answered the child.

"Not in much pain?"

"No, sir."

"I shall have to move you a little, dear," said the doctor;—"just a little. But I'll try and not hurt you, if possible; and it will soon be over. Then you will feel a great deal better."

A shadow of fear came over the child's face.

"What are you going to do, doctor?" Mrs. Eldridge had turned, and was now standing by his side.

"If you please, madam!" and the doctor waved her back with a gesture of impatience.

"Come, Harriet." Mr. Eldridge laid his hand upon the arm of his wife and tried to draw her away. But she resisted the attempt.

"What are you going to do with her, doctor?" she asked again.

Dr. Penrose raised himself from the bed, and, taking the arm of Mrs. Eldridge in a resolute way, conducted her from the room.

Don't come back, madam," he said, on gaining the passage, "until we send for you. Your nerves are too much excited; and if you remain you will do harm."

"Oh, doctor!" And Mrs. Eldridge caught hold

of the doctor's arm; but he shook her off resolutely.

"I can't stay away from my child!" she said, in a dramatic tone, making a movement to return to the apartment where the little sufferer lay.

"You must keep away, or act like a sensible woman," retorted the doctor, who was fast losing his temper.

"You are insulting!"

"And you are a ——" The word "fool" almost found an utterance.

"For heaven's sake, Eldridge, keep your wife out of the room until I can give this child the attention she needs," said the doctor, as he returned, evincing a good deal of excitement.

"H-u-s-h, doctor! Don't speak so roughly." And Mrs. Penrose laid her hand on her husband's arm and tried to soothe his temporary disturbance.

"Give all attention to your patient," said Mr. Eldridge, firmly. "I will see that you are not interrupted." And he went hastily out. His wife met him only a step from the door, in the act of returning.

"You can't go in there now," said he, resolutely, as he shut the door behind him; and Mr. Eldridge looked so sternly into his wife's face that her eyes quailed.

A little while they stood confronting each other. Then both started, as a sharp cry of pain was heard in the room where their child lay.

"What is he doing to her?" exclaimed the mother, turning pale.

"My poor, poor child!" said Mr. Eldridge, all the tenderest feelings of his heart awakened, and moving toward the little sufferer.

"Oh, dear! I cannot bear it!" cried Mrs. Eldridge, suddenly raising her hands to her ears, as shriek after shriek came from the lips of Katy: "it will kill me!"

Disgust at the utter selfishness exhibited by his wife was mingled in the heart of Mr. Eldridge with yearning pity for his child. He could not help saying, in a tone of contempt,—

"I'm afraid of the consequences in your case! Sympathy with pain is more terrible than pain itself. Perhaps she had better be removed from the house, lest her cries shock your nerves too severely!"

All was again silent in the room where Katy was alone with the doctor and his wife. The cutting rebuke just uttered was felt by Mrs. Eldridge, whose eyes quailed under the stern, almost fierce, gaze of her excited and indignant husband. With finger on her lip, Mrs. Penrose now appeared at the door, near which the parents of Katy still remained.

"It is over," she said, in a low whisper; "and she will not have to be disturbed again, poor child!"

"Is it as bad as the doctor thought?" asked Mr. Eldridge, hoarsely.

"The spine is badly injured," replied Mrs. Penrose.

"Broken?"

"So it is termed."

"My poor, unfortunate child!" Tears dimmed the eyes of Mr. Eldridge.

"Oh, it is dreadful!—dreadful!" sobbed Mrs. Eldridge. "I could have borne her death more calmly. A poor hunchback! A burden to herself and to every one else. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Is she asleep now, Mrs. Penrose?"

"She is free from pain."

"Shall I go in to her?"

"Not unless you will be very composed."

"How can I be? I am her mother; and my nerves are not of iron. How can I look at her, crippled as she is for life, and be all unmoved?"

"Then for the present you must not go near her. The doctor insists on the most perfect quiet."

Mr. Eldridge laid his hand on the arm of his wife, and endeavored to lead her away, saying, as he did so,—

"Come, Harriet! The shock has been too much for you."

But she stood firmly resistant. He still endea vored to draw her away.

"Release my arm!" she said, angrily shaking him off.

"Let reason and affection unite to govern you, Mrs. Eldridge," said Mrs. Penrose, in a low but penetrating voice. "You need them both in the present case. Under one of those mysterious permissions of Providence that look so dark in the suffering

present, you are suddenly called upon to assume a new relation,—one demanding self-denial and calling for the exercise of tender pity and unselfish love. Think not of yourself, but of your poor, dear little sufferer, whose whole life is to be marred by this sad misfortune."

"I could have seen her laid in her grave with less emotion," said Mrs. Eldridge, sobbing again. "Oh, dear! Oh, dear! To be a cripple for life!—and such a cripple! A broken-backed woman! Isn't it dreadful, Mrs. Penrose?"

The doctor's wife did not venture a reply. Disgust at the selfish mother was so strong that, had she spoken, she must have uttered words that might not be said without lasting offence.

Dr. Penrose now joined them in the passage where they were standing. He looked very serious. Mr. Eldridge came to his side, and, grasping his hand, said,—

"I know the worst, doctor. My poor child is hopelessly injured?"

"I fear so, Mr. Eldridge," replied the doctor, soberly. "It is one of those sad cases that draw deepest on the sympathies. Let me particularly enjoin," he added, in a firmer voice, and with professional emphasis, "the most perfect quiet for my patient. Above all things,"—and he looked steadily at Mrs Eldridge,—"let no allusion be made in her presence to the nature of her injury. No good can arise there from, and much evil may be occasioned."

The mother answered only by a succession of impassioned sobs and moans.

"Do not let her be moved under any pretence whatever," added the doctor. "I will call around again in about an hour, to see how she is doing. You had better remain a little while longer, Mrs. Penrose. I have one or two visits yet to make before night"

The doctor withdrew, and his wife returned to the room where the child lay, followed by Mr. and Mrs. Eldridge. Katy raised her large eyes, humid from recent suffering, and fixed them upon her father's face with a look that touched him deeply,—so deeply that he could not keep back the tears. He bent over, and pressed his lips to her forehead very tenderly.

"How does my little girl feel?" he asked, in a low voice, which had in it more of love's music for the ears of Katy than she had ever heard before.

"Better, papa!" answered the child, in a whisper, looking gratefully into his face.

"I'm glad of it," he said, laying his hand upon her head and smoothing her damp hair with a caressing movement.

"Oh, dear!" now broke in Mrs. Eldridge, with one of her dramatic sobs; "oh! my poor, poor child!" And she bent over Katy with an impassioned gesture, tears gushing over her face.

"Don't cry, mother," said Katy; "I'm better now!"

"Oh, dear, no! you a'n't any better, and you'll

never be any better, child. Oh, dear! To think it should have happened to one of my children! Oh, my! Oh, dear!"

"Harriet!"

"Mrs. Eldridge!"

Mr. Eldridge and the doctor's wife spoke in warning voices at the same moment. Katy's eyes filled with tears: she shut them tightly and turned her head away, while an expression of grief settled upon her pale face.

"For her sake," whispered Mrs. Penrose, "control yourself."

"It is easy to talk," said Mrs. Eldridge, with considerable petulance in her voice. "If it were your child who had her back broken, you wouldn't take it any more easily than I do."

Mrs. Penrose turned from the bedside and walked to the opposite part of the room. Mr. Eldridge, moved by an impulse similar to that from which Mrs. Penrose had acted, went almost hastily from the apartment, leaving the mother alone by the bedside of Katy.

A few more selfish, imbecile utterances were made, and then Mrs. Eldridge also retired, going from the room, and passing to an adjoining chamber, where she threw herself, with a feeling of weak abandonment, on a bed, and hid her face among the pillows.

As soon as Mr. Eldridge heard his wife leave Katy's room, he returned, and, sitting down by his child, bent over and looked tenderly and lovingly

upon her changed and suffering countenance, even pressing his lips again to her forehead,—a sign of affection not given until now for a long, long time. He took also one of her little hands and held it tightly within his own.

"How do you feel now, dear?" he inquired, in tones of affection.

Light came with a flash into Katy's eyes. It was not within her memory the time when her father had spoken with so much of love in his voice.

"I'm better," she simply answered, while a smile trembled about her lips and even flushed slightly her almost-colorless face. Her father kissed her again; for his heart was yearning toward her, full of pity.

"Don't you feel any pain?" he asked.

"No, father." The smile was deeper and the flush on her face warmer; for her heart was touched by the manifested love of her father as it had never been touched before. Never, perhaps, since life had grown into full consciousness, had she felt so truly happy as at this moment.

"I'm glad to hear you say so, dear." And a hand was laid gently on her head.

"I don't think William meant to do it, father," said Katy, after a little while. "He shook the tree, but he didn't know I would fall."

The brows of Mr. Eldridge contracted. He did not think, with Katy, that William was blameless. He knew too well his evil, reckless disposition.

"Don't whip him, father!" The child spoke in a

pleading voice. "He didn't mean to hurt me. How could he know that I was going to fall? And he'll be so sorry!"

Mr. Eldridge was silent with surprise. Heretofore, if either of her brothers wronged her in the slightest manner she was angrily importunate for his punishment, and took delight in the consequent suffering.

"I think he will be sorry." Mr. Eldridge spoke rather to himself than to Katy. The child took up his words instantly, saying,—

"Oh, I know he'll be sorry. He gets angry, and so do I. But he wouldn't hurt me bad on purpose."

"It's very wrong to get angry," said Mr. Eldridge.

"I know it is." The little face grew thoughtful even to seriousness. "I'll try and not get angry any more, as long as I live."

Mr. Eldridge was touched by the simple earnestness of his little one, yet more by the spirit of forgiveness, so new in her, yet so beautiful to him in its first and unexpected manifestation.

"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."

These words fell from his lips. The utterance was involuntary,—the tone in which they were said, reverent.

Katy lifted her eyes again to her father's face, and looked at him half wonderingly.

In that hour strong bonds, never to be broken, were cast around the hearts of the father and child.

Each regarded the other with a new and tenderer feeling.

"I forgive William."

These words, from the lips of Katy, broke the deep silence that followed.

Mr. Eldridge tried to respond, but he could not trust his voice. Tears suddenly filled his eyes, and he turned away his face to conceal his emotion.

Mrs. Penrose, who had been a deeply-interested witness of these new, brief passages of love between the father and child, now came forward, and, laying her hand on Mr. Eldridge, said,—

"I'm afraid this is too exciting for Katy. The doctor says she must be kept perfectly quiet. Perhaps you had better leave her alone with me?"

"You are right," answered the father, rising up quickly. Again he pressed his lips to the brow and lips of Katy, then turned away and left the room. Katy's eyes followed his retiring form as it receded through the door. When it had vanished the lids dropped slowly upon her cheeks and were shut tightly; but a gentle smile remained upon her lips.

CHAPTER XV.

MORE STRIFE.

Mr. Eldridge, on leaving the room where his suffering child lay, did not seek the apartment whither his wife had retired, but went down-stairs to his office. Instead of desiring to draw nearer to her in this affliction, her recent conduct and the spirit in which she received the painful intelligence of Katy's injury created a strong feeling of repulsion. Her visit to Mrs. Glendy's, and the circumstances under which he found her there, now that they were recalled in thought, reawakened the angry indignation felt a short time before, and he said, bitterly,—

"That was one step too far!"

The thought, starting in his mind at the same instant, that she was only occupied as he had been all day, and, perhaps, harmlessly in comparison, sent the blood hotly to his brow.

"If right for you, why wrong for her?" The question came to him with an unwelcome pertinence. But he pushed it aside with an impulsive ejaculation of scorn for a woman who could stoop to a man's vices.

A mental conflict such as this was in no way calculated to soothe the troubled mind of Mr. Eldridge,

to awaken better impulses or to strengthen those already active. All the tender feelings that moved over his heart and stirred its waters deeply as he stood bending over Katy a little while before were now obscured, and in their place was anger toward his wife, mingled with contempt for the weak selfishness she had exhibited. From this state of mind he was suddenly started by hearing her loud, quick call to William. She had come down-stairs, and was standing in the street door.

"Oh, you wicked wretch, you!" she exclaimed, a moment after. "You've almost killed your sister! Her back's broken; and she'll be a cripple for life!"

"I didn't touch her," Mr. Eldridge heard William say.

"Yes, you did, though! You shook her out of the pear-tree."

"Who says so?"

"Why, Katy says so."

"She lies! I didn't do no such thing. She fell out herself. I never touched the tree:—did I, Jacob?"

"No, you didn't," replied the elder brother, positively.

"There!—I told you I didn't. Jacob was there, and he knows, I guess."

"She's no business climbing trees like a tomboy," added Jacob. "I've told her she'd get hurt one of these days; and now she has."

"Her back's broken, and she'll be a poor cripple for life," said Mrs. Eldridge.

"'Ta'n't none of my fault. I've told her to keep out of the trees. Girls can't climb," returned William, scarcely touched by the painful intelligence.

"William!" Mr. Eldridge had come to his office door, and now called his son in a stern voice. The lad started, and grew slightly pale.

"Sir!" There was a quiver in his voice.

"I want you. Come!"

William came slowly toward his father.

"What are you going to do?" inquired Mrs. Eldridge, who moved along by the side of William. Her husband made no reply, but laid his hand on the boy's arm, as soon as he was in reach, and drew him toward the door of his office.

"He didn't shake Katy out of the tree," said Mrs. Eldridge, very positively, "and you mustn't punish him."

There came a rush of angry feelings into the heart of Mr. Eldridge at this interference, and with an impatient jerk he flung William past him into his office. The impulse given to the boy was stronger than the father had designed; for, on releasing his hold upon his arm, William was thrown with some violence to the opposite side of the room, where he struck against a chair. There was an instant wild outcry, that pealed through the house.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, my head! my head!"

"Brute!" exclaimed Mrs. Eldridge.

Dr. Penrose had entered just as William reached the door of his father's office, and witnessed all that passed. Mr. Eldridge saw him standing by the side of his wife, as he turned toward her on hearing the offensive epithet she had applied to him, and he was stung by a sense of disgrace that went deep into his heart.

"William! Cease crying this instant!" he said, sternly. But the boy heeded him not.

"You've crippled him, I suppose." Half triumphant was the tone in which Mrs. Eldridge uttered these words, as if she had an interest in fixing some wrong upon her husband.

Fearing that the boy had sustained a serious injury, Dr. Penrose stepped into the office, and, passing over to William, said to him, in a quiet, authoritative voice,—

"Stop this crying, and tell me where you are hurt."

"Here!—oh, here!" And William held his hands against the side of his head. The doctor laid his fingers on the injured parts, and found a lump like a pigeon's egg.

"It's here, is it?" he inquired.

"Yes. Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

"Come! come! Stop this crying," said the doctor, in a commanding way. "You're not hurt, of any consequence."

This decision in the case was final; and so William felt it to be, for he ceased his outcry instantly.

The scene now was painfully embarrassing to all

parties. Mr. Eldridge felt himself disgraced in the doctor's eyes by the opprobrious epithet of his wife, made under circumstances that, seen only in a single aspect, gave color to the implication.

"All this is bad, and all very mortifying, doctor," he said, after a pause. "But don't think the worst of it. I have causes of disturbance that lie deeper, perhaps, than you imagine. Will you go up and see Katy?"

The voice of Mr. Eldridge softened with the last sentence.

The doctor left the door and went up-stairs without a word in reply.

"Harriet!" (Mr. Eldridge turned with an indignant expression to his wife, the instant that Dr. Penrose left them;) "I have borne a great deal from you during the few troubled years of our married life, and I could have borne a great deal more if it went not beyond the annoyances incident to an ill-regulated, selfish, impatient temper. But, when you add to all this disgrace of yourself and family and insult to me, you go a step too far, as you will find to your sorrow."

"Oh, don't make any weak threats," was answered, with a sneer. "I'm used to them."

To this Mr. Eldridge said not a word, but passed her in the door of his office, and went up to join the doctor at Katy's bedside.

"I'm glad to find her so comfortable," said Dr. Penrose, turning from Katy, over whom he was standing. "She has no pain."

"What was the matter with William? Katy looked earnestly at her father, and with a troubled expression of countenance, as she made the inquiry.

"Nothing but a little bruise on his head," replied the doctor, not waiting for Mr. Eldridge to answer "He fell against a chair."

"I'm sure he didn't mean to hurt me," said Katy. "He didn't know I'd fall."

"Oh, no; of course he didn't mean to do it," said the doctor. "It was only in play."

"I've shaken the tree when he was in it,—and not in play, either." Katy spoke the words as if to herself, closing the sentence in a tone of self-reproach. "But I'll never do it again," she added, with a sigh. "I wouldn't have him fall and get hurt so for the world!"

Her eyes filled, and she closed the lids over them tightly.

"Don't punish him for it. He didn't know I would fall. You won't whip him? will you, father?" she said, a moment after, glancing up, through tearful eyes, into her father's face.

"No, my dear child; no!" Mr. Eldridge answered with unusual earnestness and in a voice not untouched by emotion. "Of course, your brother would not hurt you so badly on purpose."

Katy seemed relieved by this assurance. She made no further remark, but lay with her large eyes fixed upon the face of her father, between whom and herself there had suddenly grown up a new and tender interest. What depth and beauty were in

those dark eyes! Mr. Eldridge wondered as he looked into them.

"She must not be moved," said the doctor, speaking aside to Mr. Eldridge, who seemed scarcely to hear him.

"We must now leave her in your care," added the doctor. "See that she is kept as quiet as possible; and do not, on any account, permit a change of position."

"All that you direct shall be carefully observed," answered Mr. Eldridge. "I will remain with her myself all night."

The eyes of Katy turned with a look of grateful wonder toward her father. It was a new thing in the history of her young life to have any one express interest in her, much less accept self-denial for her sake. Rarely had her father spoken to her, except to rebuke. She had been repelled from rather than drawn toward him. He had been a stern reprover in the family,—not a loving and confiding friend. This was the aspect in which the wayward, ill-regulated, impulsive child had regarded her father, not conscious that it was her selfishness and ill-nature that repelled him. The change, not understood, was felt in the deeper places of her young heart, where no light had penetrated before. Sun-rays had struggled in through rifted clouds, and were warming the earth of her spirit, upon which good seeds were scattered by attendant angels.

"Lie as still as you can," said the doctor, stooping over Katy, and speaking kindly, "and be as patient

as you can. I will see you again early in the morning."

"Good-by, dear." Mrs. Penrose kissed the little sufferer. "I'll call around this evening and see you again."

"Good-by," murmured Katy.

"I shall not soon forget this kindness," said Mr. Eldridge, as he grasped the hand of Mrs. Penrose. "What should we have done without you?"

"Poor child! If we could only restore her by days, or weeks, or even months, of attention, how gladly would it be given!" replied Mrs. Penrose.

The doctor and his wife retired, and Mr. Eldridge returned and sat down, with a sad spirit, by the bedside of his injured little one. Her small white hand lay extended toward him, and he took it gently, and caressed it with a tenderness of touch that thrilled pleasantly to the heart of Katy.

"I don't feel any pain now, father," she said.

"I'm very glad of it, dear; but you mustn't talk. The doctor wants you to lie very quiet. I'll sit here. Now shut your eyes and try and get to sleep."

Katy closed her eyes in obedience to the words But the gentle wreathing of her lips in transient smiles, and the quivering of her lashes, showed that sleep was a stranger to her senses, though she remained, until the darkness of night closed in, still as if in slumber. If pain ran harshly along a nerve, she gave no sign of suffering; if weariness oppressed her frame, she stirred not.

Nearly an hour went by, all the inmates of the

house beyond the chamber preserving a marked stillness, as if death were in the dwelling. Then Mr. Eldridge noted a deeper breathing. It was al most dark in the room, and he could not tell by the face of Katy whether she slept or not. But in a little while all doubt was removed, and he knew that sweet forgetfulness had stolen upon her spirit. With quiet steps he went to the window and drew the curtains closer, then went softly from the room.

CHAPTER XVI.

ALIENATION.

The news of the accident to Katy soon passed from l p to lip, until most of the people in Arden knew of its occurrence. Friends, neighbors, and even strangers to the family, called during the evening to make inquiries or sympathize with Mrs. El dridge in her trouble. Among these were Mrs. Weakly and Mrs. Glendy, who remained with their distressed friend longest and latest of all. When Dr. Penrose came in, between nine and ten o'clock, to see his little patient, he found her awake, a glare of lighted lamps in the room, and her mother, with three or four women,—among them the two just mentioned,—seated close to her bed, in a lively round of conversation.

"This won't do, friends," he said, promptly "My

little patient must be kept quiet. It was my last direction. Will you remove one of those lights, Mrs. Eldridge?"

There was so much displeasure in the doctor's voice that his words had instant effect. The women felt the rebuke, and most of them retired from the apartment.

Dr. Penrose found the pulse of Katy considerably excited. And no wonder, after all she had been listening to from the lips of three or four gossiping females, who had become so much interested in their own tittle-tattle as to forget that a listener was present whose ears could not help drinking in their words with thirsty eagerness.

"You must excuse the remark, Mrs. Eldridge," said Dr. Penrose, when left finally alone with the mother of Katy, "but all this is very thoughtless and very wrong. I was particular in saying that your child must be kept very quiet. Her life depends upon it."

"I can't see, doctor, how I was to help myself," was answered, a little petulantly. "If neighbors will come in and talk, what am I to do?"

"Keep them from the room where your sick child lies. The remedy is very simple, madam."

"It is easy enough——"

"Madam!"—the doctor's impatient spirit boiled over:—"Madam!" he interrupted her, speaking in a low voice,—"you are a *mother;* and a mother's heart, if in the right place, needs no promptings to duty in a case like this."

Mrs. Eldridge tossed her head with an offended manner, as she replied,—

"I am not used to hearing such language, sir, from any one."

"I can't help it," replied the doctor, who was not overstocked with patience at any time, and who felt particularly worried just now. "I have spoken only the truth, as required by my professional obligations. If you will not hear, *my* skirts are freed from consequences."

All this was said by the doctor in an undertone, so that his words could not reach Katy's ears. As he closed the last sentence he turned abruptly away from Mrs. Eldridge, who fairly rushed from the room, and sought her husband, to whom, with crimsoned face and passion-burning eyes, she exclaimed,—

"Dr. Penrose has insulted me!"

"You have probably misinterpreted his language," said Mr. Eldridge, coolly.

"I tell you I have not! He has insulted me; and you are no man if you do not resent it!"

"In what way has he insulted you?" Mr. Eldridge still remained cool in exterior, almost to indifference.

"By words and deportment, both!" was replied.

"I presume he turned that tribe of gossiping, thoughtless women out of Katy's room; and I am glad he had nerve enough to do so. It is no more than I ought to have done an hour ago."

"And why didn't you do it, pray?" retorted Mrs. Eldridge, with a sneer, her whole manner suddenly changing.

"Only that I feared it would be worse for our poor child." Mr. Eldridge said this in a low, almost sad, voice.

"Worse for her? I don't understand you!"

"No matter. They're gone now, thank heaven! and poor Katy has some chance again for the rest and quiet so essential to her condition. If it is on this account that you are offended with the doctor, I cannot resent any thing that has been said, though he have spoken never so sharply."

Thus, every new aspect of affairs had the effect to separate and alienate instead of uniting the parents, at a time when the pressure of misfortune, in the case of their child, should have driven them closer together. In fact, the incidents of the day in which each had taken a peculiar part were in no way calculated to bring the mind in harmony with itself or to produce a right state of feeling toward others. The rapidly-gliding hours had seen Eldridge in a continued fever of excitement; while the employment and associations of Mrs. Eldridge had altogether failed to leave with her approving thoughts or tranquil feelings. The intrusion of her husband at Mrs. Glendy's, and his consequent knowledge of her presence there, produced, even with the grief of her child's misfortune, a state of defiance toward him not in any degree lessened by the few angry passages which had already occurred between them.

Very darkly fell the shadows over this unhappy household. The night was one memorable in the history of its inmates. The husband and wife occu-

pied rooms separate from each other,—Mr. Eldridge remaining, all the hours until morning broke, in the chamber with Katy, toward whom his heart yearned with a new-born compassion. Not for an instant during the time had sleep weighed down his eyelids; but all through the long watches thought battled with thought, and his mind groped about in the darkness of the present, eagerly seeking for light upon the future. The real character of Craig was now as plainly revealed to him as if "gambler" had been written on his forehead; and, after a full review of his relation toward that individual, judgment and conscience both decided that it would be wiser and better to have no further trials of skill with him, but to meet the losses already sustained as best he could. This conclusion was not arrived at without a struggle against the necessity of giving up all hope of recovering the large sums of money he had lost, amounting to over nine hundred dollars.

The result touching Judge Gray and the land speculations was not so clear. Many things led him to believe that between Craig and the judge there existed an evil compact; while other considerations came in with strong doubts of the justice of any such conclusion. Now that the loss of nine hundred dollars to Craig was regarded as inevitable, the greater necessity existed for obtaining money by some quicker way than his profession afforded.

But for this necessity he would have decided to abandon at once all his recently-formed connections with a company of men in whom he did not feel

the clearest confidence. If, wing-weary, his spirit could now have flown back to the ark of home, sure that a hand would be extended to receive,—sure of a loving heart to welcome,—with what eager, trembling hope, like the dove of old, would that spiri have fluttered its pinions in the troubled air, soon to fold them in peace and safety! In this hour of darkness and temptation—of conflict between good and evil—the loving voice of a true-hearted wife, uttering words of divine power,—"Peace; be still!" —would have ended the strife. The waters would have been assuaged; the bow of promise would have spanned beautifully the heaven of his soul.

Alas for him that it was not so! When the morning broke upon nature it did not image the state of Eldridge. His mind was still in darkness, confusion, and doubt. He felt weak for good, and almost desperate under the assaults of evil.

During the latter part of the night Katy had been restless, though she complained but little and seemed grateful for every attention received from her father. The morning showed a pale face, on which no eye could fail to note marks of suffering

"Have you been up all night, father?" she asked.

"Yes, dear," he answered, gently.

"Where is mother?"

"In the next room."

Katy looked earnestly at her father for some moments, and with an unusual expression on her face.

"Kiss me," she murmured at last. The request was spoken timidly, as if she were in doubt whether

her father would respond as her heart desired. He did respond, and with a tenderness that satisfied her spirit, thirsting for repeated draughts at the new well-spring of love which had suddenly burst forth in the desert of her young life.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN EXCITING SCENE.

THERE are few sacrifices of feeling that a true wife will not make for her husband when the trial of her love comes. Mrs. Penrose had a native delicacy of feeling and a sense of personal independence that caused her to shrink from trespassing in any way upon the rights or privileges of others. She was ever ready to confer favors, but rarely asked of another any thing for herself.

From the moment she became aware of the peculiar difficulties that beset her husband's way, she resolved to aid him, if it were in a woman's power to do so. Her first impulse was to call upon Mr. Barlow and seek to divert him from his stern purpose. But the more she thought of this, the less inclined was she to put either herself or her husband in so unpleasant a relation to any man. The act involved a diminution of self-respect, and pride awakened with a protest. So that purpose was, for a time, abandoned.

The doctor's countenance continued to wear a sober aspect, as day after day went by and the means of extrication from his difficulties appeared as remote as ever. He talked but little with his wife on the subject. When he did refer to it she always spoke encouragingly, and said that she knew the worst he dreaded would never come. At last, notice of an immediate foreclosure of the mortgage was served and a day of sale mentioned. Dr. Penrose was stricken down with despair. His hands dropped helplessly. He felt like abandoning his struggle with the world.

"Never give up!" said his wife firmly. "The darkest hours of the night are just before day-dawn."

"There will be no day-dawn for us, Lucy," was the sad reply. "We are in the hands of one who knows not mercy. Our pleasant home must be given up,—the little we have saved through self-denials wept away I cannot bear the thought! It maddens me!"

A low voice, full of loving assurance, stole over his spirit and calmed its turbulence.

"You shame me, Lucy," said Dr. Penrose. "I will be more of a man, and bear this trouble, as I should, with a manlier firmness."

After a pause, he added, "I will take heart again, and make a new effort to save myself. I will see Judge Gray this very night, and have another talk with him. He has always shown a friendly spirit, and may, when he learns to what extremity

Barlow is about proceeding, put it into my power to prevent the sacrifice he seems bent on making. Acquainted with all legal matters as he is, he will at least advise me how best to act in this trying emergency."

The bare mention of Judge Gray's name in this connection caused an unpleasant feeling to arise in the mind of Mrs. Penrose. Since she had heard of his meetings, with other citizens of Arden, at McQuillan's, and of his effort to get her husband to join in these convocations, she had looked upon all association with him as involving some unknown danger, and there now arose a vague fear in her heart which it was impossible to overcome. The impulse to say "Don't go to *him*" was so strong that she repressed it with difficulty.

It was late in the afternoon. Dr. Penrose had hurried through his visits, and was home earlier than usual.

"After tea I will go around and see the judge," he said, as hope began to revive the longer he thought of once more applying to Judge Gray.

Mrs. Penrose made no response.

"I'm not sure," added the doctor, "that I have been right in keeping aloof from him, after his cordial way of treating me last week. He as good as received my word to meet him with some other gentlemen at McQuillan's; and I am not altogether satisfied that I was right in failing to keep my promise. The fact is," he added, "promises should always be kept sacredly."

"I am in part to blame for that, you know," said Mrs. Penrose, forcing a smile.

"I believe you are; but you meant well, as you always do," replied her husband. "I only hope it is not yet too late to gain what I desired to gain last week,—the substantial interest of Judge Gray."

Mrs. Penrose said nothing in answer to this, though her heart sunk within her. Without knowing any thing of Judge Gray, his associations or principles, that gave color to her fears, she felt an overwhelming dread of having her husband come into any kind of intimate association with him, particularly under present circumstances, when the desperate condition of his affairs laid him open to temptation. Some household duty claiming her attention, she left him, without venturing a word of opposition to the purpose he had declared.

After tea, Mrs. Penrose said to her husband, coming to the door of his office, whither he had gone after leaving the table,—

"I am going out for a few minutes. Don't leave until I return."

"You mustn't stay long," replied the doctor. "I have two or three patients to visit, and want to see them early."

"I'll be gone only a very little while. So be sure to wait for me."

Mrs. Penrose left the house, and took her way down the street with a step firm enough to show a definite purpose, yet a little hurried,—indicative of disturbed or anxious thought. The fact was, she

had made up her mind to try the desperate resort of an appeal to Mr. Barlow himself, as less to be feared or deprecated than an application for aid to Judge Gray.

Mr. Barlow's residence was at some distance from that part of the town where Dr. Penrose resided, and Mrs. Penrose moved on quickly, the evening twilight falling around and deepening steadily toward darkness. As she drew nearer and nearer the dwelling of their unfeeling creditor her heart beat more heavily, her thoughts were more confused, and she could fix upon no manner of address that was satisfactory to her own mind, as promising to give the subject of her mission a favorable introduction. A little way from the house she paused to recover the even tone of her mind, disturbed beyond its wont. It was a new errand to her, that upon which she was speeding, and one the thought of which caused a painful sense of humiliation. All her native pride and independence arose in opposition to the act proposed, and she felt her cheeks growing hot with shame. But weak hesitation must not continue. There was a stern duty to perform; and the time had come. So she moved on again.

The dwelling of Mr. Barlow stood a little way from the street, and the entrance was through a flower-garden. Mrs. Penrose laid her hand upon the gate, swung it open, and stepped inside upon the gravel walk that led up to the door. As she turned, after closing the gate, to pass down the walk, she noticed a light glancing from one window

to another, in the upper rooms, as if carried by some person in a hurried manner. Voices were heard in quick ejaculations. Then a sharp cry of pain reached the ears of Mrs. Penrose. It was the cry of a child. With a woman's and a mother's instinct she sprung forward toward the house.

"Run for Dr. Penrose!" she heard Mrs. Barlow say, in a voice of anguish.

"No!" was quickly responded: "go for Dr. Grant." Mrs. Penrose knew the speaker to be Mr. Barlow.

Before the messenger left the door, Mrs. Penrose entered.

"What has happened?" she asked, with an earnestness and sympathy that was felt, even by the half-abashed creditor, to be real.

"Oh, Mrs. Penrose! is it you? I'm so glad! Come here as quickly as you can! What shall we do? Our Anna is dreadfully scalded!"

Mrs. Barlow had grasped the arm of Mrs. Penrose, and was almost dragging her away.

"Is the doctor at home?" asked Mr. Barlow, in a hurried voice.

"I left him there just now," replied Mrs. Penrose.

"John, go for Dr. Penrose," said Mr. Barlow; "and tell him to come quickly. Say that Anna is badly scalded, and that he must not delay an instant."

The messenger darted off, and Mrs. Penrose went back into the sitting-room, where she found the youngest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Barlow, a child

about six years old, writhing in anguish indescribable and screaming wildly. She had gone to the stove, on which was a kettle of boiling water, set by a domestic carelessly on the edge, and, in reaching over for something, had thrown it over, the contents penetrating her garments on one side and scalding her from the hips downward. In the wild excitement that followed no one had yet attempted to remove the little one's garments, so that the real injury she had sustained was not known.

"Bring me a sheet of raw cotton, and some sweet-oil or lard," said Mrs. Penrose, in a firm voice, at once assuming to direct where all had lost their self-possession. She then lifted the child carefully in her arms, speaking to her encouraging and compassionate words, and commenced removing her clothes. All her left hip, and the leg down to the ankle, were of an angry crimson, with here and there white spots, where blisters were already forming.

"Be quick!" said Mrs. Penrose. "Let me have the cotton and oil with as little delay as possible."

"Don't cry, dear," she added, speaking encouragingly to the child. "It won't hurt you long."

Mr. Barlow, whose feelings were greatly shocked, and who felt like going off to some remote part of the house, that he might neither see the condition of his child or hear her terrible screams, forced himself, from something like duty, to come forward and see to what extent the little one was injured. A sight of the scalded limb caused him to utter an exclamation of pain, and turn, sickening, away.

"My poor, poor child! It is dreadful Can nothing be done for her? Oh, when will the doctor be here?" he said, as he paced the floor with hurried steps.

"There is no oil in the house," said Mrs. Barlow, coming into the room; "but here is lard:" she held a plate in her hand.

"That will do," replied Mrs. Penrose. "Now bring me a little soot from the chimney. Get it as quickly as possible. A handful will do."

The soot was brought with scarcely a moment's delay, and thrown upon the lard by direction of Mrs. Penrose, who hastily mixed it with her hand and then laid it upon the burned flesh. All over this the cotton was spread, so that every part of the scalded surface was entirely covered from the air. By the time this was done, the cries of Anna had ceased; and her eyes, swimming in tears, were fixed upon the earnest face of Mrs. Penrose with a look full of gratitude. Mr. Barlow had witnessed, with trembling eagerness, the application, and saw the almost instantaneous effect.

"We have taken it in good time," said Mrs. Penrose, "and I think the skin will be saved. Poor child! you feel better now?"

"Yes, ma'am," murmured the little one, still keeping her thankful eyes on the face of Mrs. Penrose.

"God bless you!" Mr. Barlow's feelings were touched, and he could not keep back from his lips the gratitude suddenly felt for the instrument of

relief to his suffering child. "I shall never forget this, Mrs. Penrose."

Mrs. Penrose lifted her eyes to the face of her husband's hard creditor and looked at him steadily for a few moments. He understood her, for his gaze dropped. But he looked up quickly, and returned her glance with a meaning in his face that she understood as well as if he had clothed his thoughts in words. She saw that he was conquered, and that their dark hour of trial had passed away.

Hurried footsteps along the passage now heralded the arrival of Dr. Penrose. Mr. Barlow grasped his hand as he came in, and said,—

"Thank you, doctor, for coming so promptly. Our dear little Anna has met with a sad accident."

"Scalded? So I understood your messenger."

"Yes; from her hip, on the left side, down to the ankle."

"What has been done?" Dr. Penrose turned toward that part of the room where the family were grouped around the child.

"Lucy!" he ejaculated: "you here?"

The doctor's surprise was genuine.

"Yes," she replied. "I was just by the gate when the accident happened, and have done all I could for the dear child."

"What have you done?"

The hurried treatment was described.

"You are a capital doctor's wife," said Dr. Penrose, smiling. "I don't see that you have left your

husband much to do. Is the surface of the skin well covered?"

"Oh, yes. I saw to that particularly."

"Why did you use the soot in the lard?' inquired the doctor.

"It is one of my old Aunt Patty's remedies; and she says it is unfailing. Many a burn and scald have I seen her treat with soot and lard, and blisters rarely showed themselves afterward."

"Creosote has, of late, been used in burns by some physicians, and with encouraging results," remarked the doctor. "The good qualities of the soot, if any there be, depend, no doubt, on the presence of that substance. Apart from this, however, the other applications are right; and for the present we will not disturb them."

"She appears very easy now," said the mother of Anna. "At first her screams were awful, and chilled the blood to my heart. But almost on the instant that your wife commenced covering the burn her cries lost their wild anguish. Oh, how shall we be sufficiently thankful for her timely call and wise, prompt action?"

"Dr. Penrose,"—Mr. Barlow laid his hand on the doctor's arm,—"let me say a word to you."

The two men retired across the room.

"We've both been a little hasty and a little to blame," said Mr. Barlow: "I'm not a hard man at the core, though some people think I am. I'm irritable and self-willed, and rather stubborn sometimes, I know, and apt to push things resolutely. So much

in explanation of a matter that I wish had never occurred. But we'll let the past go for what it is worth. Your good wife has disarmed and rebuked me, besides laying me under an obligation which I would be worse than a heathen not to repay. Take your own time, doctor. You'll hear no more from me. I know, and every man in Arden knows, you to be right at heart. I was wrong, and so felt it in my conscience, to trouble your peace as I have done."

Dr. Penrose caught the hand of Mr. Barlow and grasped it eagerly.

"You have lifted a crushing weight from my heart," said he. "I was in despair!"

"Had you no resource?" inquired Mr. Barlow, who, now that a feeling like sympathy for his debtor was awakened, felt a rising curiosity to know what he had proposed doing.

"None that I could rely upon. As a last resource, I was going to-night to see Judge Gray and some of his friends; and, had your messenger arrived ten minutes later, he would not have found me at home."

There was a pause of some moments.

"Dr. Penrose," (Mr. Barlow spoke slowly, and with unusual emphasis,) "let me say this to you:— *Beware of Judge Gray and his friends!*"

"May I ask why you give this earnest caution?" inquired the doctor.

"I say nothing further Beware of Judge Gray and his friends. If you are wise you will heed my words; and time will verify their import."

"I shall certainly heed them," said Dr. Penrose, "for they but echo my own vague suspicions."

Dr. Penrose and his wife went homeward a little while after, with light and thankful spirits:—their sleep was sound and their dreams full of hopeful images. And the sleep of their softened creditor was pleasanter, for all the grief felt for his suffering child, than it would have been had not the Angel of Mercy found entrance to his heart.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SOWING THE WIND.

Soon after day dawned, Mr. Eldridge went to the room where his wife slept, and awakened her.

"I've been up all night, Harriet," said he, "and feel very weary. Will you come and stay with Katy while I lie down for an hour?"

"Will I? Of course I will! You speak as if I had no interest in the child!" replied Mrs. Eldridge, pettishly.

A keen retort was on the lips of Mr. Eldridge, but he kept it back.

"Is she sleeping?" inquired Mrs. Eldridge.

"No; I left her awake. She slept tolerably well through the night, poor child!"

The tone of pity in which Mr. Eldridge said "poor child" annoyed his wife, for it seemed to

imply a doubt of her right feeling for the suffering little one.

"Poor child!" She repeated the words in a slightly-contemptuous voice. "You talk and act as if nobody cared for her but yourself!"

"Actions speak for themselves," coldly replied Mr. Eldridge, as he turned away and went to another apartment.

The retort stung Mrs. Eldridge; for she had passed the night sleeping, while her husband watched with Katy.

After taking some time to dress, she went into Katy's room. She was far from being in a gentle frame of mind. Tenderness did not rule her feelings. She felt cold toward her child,—the coldness having its origin in the implied censure of her husband for that indifference which could permit her to sleep through the night and leave to him the task of watching. She did not smile as she approached the bed, and asked, in a voice that stirred no loving emotion,—

"How are you, dear?"

"I'm better." And Katy, whose large eyes had been eagerly reading her mother's face for some love-records, turned her head aside, and let the long lashes, wet with tears of pain a little while before, fall slowly upon her pale cheeks. How sad the poor child felt! Helpless, and exhausted by suffering, her heart asked for tender pity, and longed for loving words that only a mother's voice could utter. But they came not at the moment when expectation

was most eager; and the pain of disappointment then felt was the keenest her young spirit had known.

Mrs. Eldridge noticed the movement and was annoyed by it. The mother's love was not strong enough in her heart to make her comprehend the mental condition of her child. She did not understand the new state into which she had been born, nor imagined the new capacities and new desires with which she had been suddenly endowed.

"Why do you turn your head away?" she asked, in a quick, stern voice.

Katy's eyes flew up, and, with a surprised, grieving look, she turned them upon her mother's face. Mrs. Eldridge saw that they were full of tears.

A faint glimmer of light came into her mind, and an emotion of true pity for the child was awakened in her heart; but the light was very dim and the emotion feeble.

Katy answered not in words, and the harsh query was not repeated. Silence followed, while the distance between mother and child increased instead of diminishing.

"Did you sleep through the night?' asked Mrs Eldridge.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Do you feel any pain now?"

"Not much."

"You feel some pain?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Where?"

"All over my back."

The eyes of Katy were fixed on her mother's face, while the questions and answers passed, looking for some tokens of the pity and tenderness for which her heart was panting. But she found them not. The selfish mother's thoughts were with herself rather than with her child. Without asking Katy if she wanted any thing, or if there was any thing that she could do for her, Mrs. Eldridge left the bedside and commenced putting things in order about the room.

"Was ever a place in such confusion?" she muttered. "Dear! dear!" she went on, as she moved about the room; "a tumbler of water spilled on the carpet, that's soaking wet. Who did this?"

"It was father, I believe," answered Katy, to whom the question was addressed.

"I didn't suppose it was anybody else!"

Katy could not understand why her mother should turn upon her with an angry look and tone, when she simply answered her question, and that, too, with a feeling of reluctance, because she feared that blame might be attached to her father.

Talking to herself in a fretful, impatient way, Mrs. Eldridge continued moving about the room, until every thing was restored to something like order; and it cannot be denied that the whole aspect of the apartment was materially changed for the better. All it wanted was the light of love to warm its icy coldness of aspect and to soften its harsher outlines.

"Do you want any thing?"

The most important work done,—that of "putting things to right,"—the mother next thought of her child. The question was made in a tone that almost extorted a negative answer, it was so full of indifference.

"No, ma'am," answered Katy. There was a sadness in the feeble voice which uttered these words that made its way to the consciousness of Mrs. Eldridge and rebuked her strange coldness toward her child.

"Would you like a drink of cool water?"

"Yes, ma'am. I'm very dry."

"Why didn't you say so when I asked a moment ago if you wanted any thing?"

An instant flush of anger was in the mother's face.

"You act as if you thought I didn't want to do any thing for you," she added. "Now, I'm not going to have any of this sort of nonsense, my young lady! and you needn't begin with it. When you want any thing, say so. It will be bad enough to have you lying about helpless,—to be waited on for every thing,—without having airs put on."

Mrs. Eldridge left the room. When she returned, Katy was sobbing violently.

"Here's the water," said she, in a cold, almost harsh, voice. "Take it."

But Katy did not look up nor cease weeping. It was not from passion, nor pride, nor captiousness, that she wept. The harsh accusation of her mother,

so unjust toward her and so cruel under the circumstances, had smitten her young heart, in which new and tender feelings had been created, with such pair that nature cried out in anguish.

"Stop this, now! I'll have none of it!" The mother spoke very sharply.

The poor child tried to rally herself,—tried to repress the nervous impulses that were ruling her,—but in vain. She sobbed even more violently.

"Take this water! Katy! Do you hear? You said you were dry; now drink! You needn't put on these airs. They go for nothing with me. I understand you!"

Mrs. Eldridge was angry and resolute, and Katy was unable to control herself.

"You've got to drink it!" said the mother, blind with passion.

She was passing a hand under the shoulders of Katy, in order to raise her up and force the water into her mouth, when her husband, who had been listening in a state of strong excitement to what his wife was saying, no longer able to restrain his feelings, came into the room. Seeing the movement, and knowing that, the instant an attempt to lift he in that way was made, terrible pain, if not displacement of the spine, would be the consequence, he sprung forward, and, grasping the arm of his wife, drew her from the bed with almost a giant's force, exclaiming, as he did so,—

"Mad woman! do you wish to kill your child?"

"What spirit possesses you?" he added, turning

to where she now stood frightened at the sudden movement, and scowling fiercely upon her. "Don't you know that her spine is injured? and that she must not be moved, except with the greatest care?"

A little while the husband and wife stood glaring at each other. The latter soon recovered from the stupor of surprise into which the assault had thrown her.

You will repent of this," she spoke, in a low, resolute voice. "I have said that no man should ever lay his hand on me in anger and not repent of it; and I will keep my word to the death!"

The blood which had a few moments before crimsoned her face all left it; and she stood, motionless and statue-like, with a countenance pale and distorted.

Mr. Eldridge was in no mood for conciliation: so he only waved his hand impatiently and curled his lip. The cool contempt with which he met her threatening words, which were no unmeaning utterance, stung his wife into momentary madness. With an imprecation that startled him by its profanity, she glanced from the room and left him alone with their frightened little one.

Silently Mr. Eldridge sat down by the side of Katy, partly averting his face from her, yet moving his hand over the bed until it rested on one of hers, which it grasped with a tender pressure, that was returned eagerly.

"Will you have some water?" he asked, after a few moments had elapsed.

"No, father. I'm not dry now," murmured the child.

"Don't you want any thing?"

"No, father."

"Does your back pain you much?"

"Not now."

The heart of Mr. Eldridge swelled with tenderness for Katy, as her little hand kept clasping his, its touch of love thrilling to his heart; and he leaned over and kissed her.

"I love you, father!" It seemed as if the child could not keep back the words from her lips.

"Dear Katy!" He kissed her again, and then sat for a long time silent, buried in troubled thoughts and trying to penetrate the thick clouds that darkened his sky and shadowed the way along which his feet must tread.

CHAPTER XIX.

FALSE FRIENDS.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mrs. Weakly; "is Katy dead?"

"No. It would be better, perhaps, if she were!"

"You are terribly agitated, Mrs. Eldridge. What has happened?"

"That which crushes all softness out of my woman's heart. Eldridge has dared to put his hands on me!"

"What!"

"Has dared to put his hands on me in anger; and I'll never forgive him!"

"Sit down; calm yourself," said Mrs. Weakly. "This is a serious business!"

"It *is* a serious business. Half an hour ago he did that to me which he will never have the opportunity of repeating. I have left his house, and forever. All I want here is shelter for a few days, and your wise counsel."

"Both of which, dear, injured friend, you shall have. But tell me all that has happened."

"I can remember nothing except that he laid his hand on me in anger. This blasting fact sweeps all else from my memory."

"Strike a wife!" exclaimed Mrs. Weakly, excited into strong womanly indignation. "My blood seethes at the mention of such an outrage! You did well to leave on the instant."

"He did not strike me." No; Mrs. Eldridge said not these words, although they sprung to her lips and truth pleaded for their utterance.

"Strike a wife!" repeated the friend. "Such a thing has not before been known in Arden!"

"Where is your husband?" inquired Mrs. Eldridge.

"He hasn't come down yet this morning."

"I do not wish to meet him," said Mrs. Eldridge.

"No necessity for that. Come up with me to our little spare room, and you shall be cloistered like a nun."

The two women went hastily and silently up to the spare chamber, which was in the story above where Mr. Weakly slept.

"How you tremble! Compose yourself," said Mrs. Weakly, as they entered the room. "Hadn't you better lie down?"

Mrs. Eldridge threw herself with an abandoned air upon the bed, giving way to a flood of tears as she did so.

"My poor, unhappy friend! To think that this dreadful ordeal was in store for you! I never could have believed it of Eldridge,—the brute! To strike a wife!—the climax of all outrages. Do you know that was the reason why Mrs. Glendy separated from her husband?"

"I never heard it before."

"It is true. I once had the whole story from her own lips. She is not much given to the melting mood; but, I can tell you, she cried like a child when she related the circumstance. She loved her husband; but the outrage was one that her pride never would forgive. She loved him to the last hour of his life, but never saw him from the day he lifted his hand against her, and never forgave him. She is a woman of true spirit. We must advise with her."

"Oh, yes! I must see her, and as soon as possible. My own thoughts are too much in confusion. I cannot see clearly. I am in the centre of a bewildering maze."

"How is poor little Katy?" asked Mrs. Weakly, her thoughts naturally reverting to the child.

"Don't speak of her!" exclaimed Mrs. Eldridge, putting up both hands and averting her face. "I cannot bear it!"

It did occur to Mrs. Weakly that perhaps, under the circumstances, something was due from Mrs Eldridge to her hopelessly-injured little one, and that for her sake a great deal ought to have been endured. She could not really understand how it was possible for a mother to abandon her child to stranger-hands only a few hours after having been hurt in so dreadful a manner. But the subject appeared to distress her friend so deeply that she asked no further questions, and tried to push aside from her own mind a view of the case that rather tended to subdue the enthusiasm at first awakened in behalf of the outraged wife. Her own heart told her that a mother's love, in this case, should have been stronger than a wife's indignation.

At breakfast Mr. Weakly said to his wife,—

"Who was the person I heard you talking with so earnestly this morning? The voice sounded like that of Eldridge's wife. She's an early visitor."

"Eldridge's wife!" Mrs. Weakly tossed her head and laughed lightly. "You must have been asleep and dreaming, instead of awake and listening, as you imagined. Eldridge's wife! Poor thing!" (the voice fell into a more sober tone,) "she has something else to do with her broken-backed child, besides gadding about before breakfast in the morning."

"So I should imagine," said Mr. Weakly. "Poor

little thing! I wonder how she passed the night. It was a dreadful accident. I cannot bear to think of it."

"Dreadful indeed. Poor child!" said Mrs. Weakly, in a tone of womanly sympathy, "what a life she has before her! If she were my child I could wish her dead rather than so hopelessly crippled and deformed!"

After breakfast Mr. Weakly went out, as usual, to his business, and Mrs. Weakly hurried up to her friend with a cup of tea and some light articles of food. The tea only was taken; and then the question—"What is to be done?"—was earnestly debated.

Without the more experienced advice of Mrs. Glendy it was found impossible to reach any satisfactory conclusion. The day was now too far advanced for Mrs. Eldridge to go abroad, as she would be seen; and she wished, for the present, to remain concealed. So her friend put on her bonnet and ran over to see the wise counsellor who was to guide the bark of their mutual friend safely over the dangerous reefs upon which it had been suddenly cast. Her call was an unusually early one, and Mrs. Weakly had to wait a long time before Mrs. Glendy made her appearance. At last she came into the parlor with an impressive air, kissed her visitor warmly, and said, as she grasped her hand,—

"Good-morning, my dear Mrs. Weakly. You have given me an early and pleasant surprise.

But you look serious, my friend. Ah! no wonder That dreadful scene we witnessed last night was enough to make any one feel serious. Poor Mrs. Eldridge! I pity her from my heart."

"And you may well pity her," said Mrs. Weakly; "for she has a worse trouble than that."

"Worse! How? You startle me!"

"A great deal worse:—a trouble past mending," said Mrs. Weakly, in a solemn manner.

"Speak! What is it? I have a heart to feel."

"She had some angry words with her husband this morning, and he——"

Mrs. Weakly paused.

"What?" Mrs. Glendy bent forward eagerly.

"Struck her!"

Mrs. Glendy, who had taken a seat beside her friend, started up, with clenched hand and burning cheeks, exclaiming,—

"Man's unpardonable sin against woman! Struck her, did you say?" And Mrs. Glendy leaned her face close to that of her friend.

"Yes; struck her," said Mrs. Weakly, speaking low in her throat;—"struck her!"

"And she left his house on the instant?"

"She did."

"Right! She would have been unworthy the name of woman had she remained an hour after the commission of such an outrage! Where is she?"

"At my house; and she desires to see you as soon as possible."

"I will be there right early. Say to her that I

deeply sympathize with her, approve her course, and beg of her to be calm, womanly, and resolute."

"How soon may we expect you?" asked Mrs. Weakly.

"In less than half an hour."

"What if Mr. Eldridge, learning that his wife is at my house, should call there and demand an interview?"

"Let it be imperatively refused. He has lifted his hand against her, and that act should work an eternal separation between a man and his wife, driving them as far asunder as the antipodes. Henceforth let them be nothing to each other."

"So say I. If Weakly were to—but that is impossible," added Mrs. Weakly; "it isn't in him; and, if it were, his knowledge of my spirit would forever keep his passions under control."

Mrs. Weakly was within a short distance of her house, on her return from Mrs. Glendy's, when she saw Mr. Eldridge coming hurriedly down the street. They met at her door. He looked pale and excited.

"Have you seen my wife this morning?" he asked, almost roughly.

"Your wife?" There was evasion in the voice and manner of Mrs. Weakly.

"Yes; my wife. Have you seen her?"

"No, sir," firmly answered Mrs. Weakly. "She is no longer his wife: that blow severed the bond,' she said to herself, in palliation of the falsehood.

Eldridge gazed into the face of Mrs. Weakly for

a few moments. She returned his look with an unflinching steadiness, and then said, in a tone of well-feigned interest,—

"Poor little Katy! How did she pass the night? and how is she this morning?"

"She is doing as well as could be expected, all things considered," replied Mr. Eldridge. After a moment he added, "You are certain that you have not seen Mrs. Eldridge?"

"I have already answered that question, sir," replied Mrs. Weakly, in an offended manner. "But why do you ask?" A woman's curiosity prompted this query.

"She left home more than an hour ago, and I cannot imagine where she has gone."

"Why did she leave?" was inquired.

"Heaven knows! I don't."

"Some good reason, no doubt," said Mrs. Weakly.

"Some good reason for a woman, it may be." Mr. Eldridge curled his lip as he spoke, adding, "Your woman's reasons are generally whims and impulses, as far as I can see. They will, but never think."

"But they know how to will with a will," retorted Mrs. Weakly, in a sharp voice, "as some men know to their cost, and as you may perhaps discover, to your sorrow, before you die."

"I've found that out already," said Eldridge. "But that doesn't signify now. I don't wish to exchange sharp words with any one, but to find my wife. Should you see her, oblige me by saying to

her that her sick and crippled child needs her attention and must have it."

"*Must* is no word for a man to utter when speaking of his wife," said Mrs. Weakly.

A slight sound at the moment reached the ears of Mr. Eldridge, and, glancing upward by a kind of instinct, he saw the face of his wife looking down upon him from between the partly-closed shutters above. For only a moment he saw it; in the next it was hidden from his sight.

"Ha!" he ejaculated. "So she is here?"

"Who is here?" boldly asked Mrs. Weakly.

"My wife, as I supposed. Will you bear to her a message from her husband?"

"Your *wife* is not here." Mrs. Weakly laid a particular emphasis on the word "wife."

"I feared that she was in the hands of bad advisers," said Mr. Eldridge, sternly; "it is clear now. A thoughtless, wrong-minded woman has power to do a vast amount of harm in this world."

"Rail on, sir! Contempt for woman is by most of your sex considered a manly virtue."

Mr. Eldridge waved his hand impatiently, saying,—

"I am in no mood to bandy words. Do me only a single favor. Bear this message to my wife."

Curiosity as to the message was stronger than the suddenly-formed purpose of Mrs. Weakly to deny the existence of a true marital relation.

"Say on, sir. I am all attention," she replied.

"Tell her from me that, for the sake of her suffer-

ing child, I wish her to return home at once." Mr Eldridge spoke very much like a man in earnest; and so he was. "Say to her that all of this day the doors of my house remain open; but that after the sun goes down they will be closed against her, and forever!"

"Yes, sir; I understand!" And the little woman curled her lip and tossed her head.

"All I desire, madam, is that you will repeat my words. May I depend on you?" said Eldridge.

"Oh, certainly, sir. I will give them to the letter," returned Mrs. Weakly, in a defiant manner.

"Good-morning!" And before the lady had time for a word in reply Mr. Eldridge was striding away in the direction of his home.

CHAPTER XX.

DRIVEN TO DESPERATION.

Mr. Eldridge, shocked, outraged, and discouraged by the conduct of his wife toward Katy, did not leave the bedside again until breakfast was announced. For a portion of the time he had remained with his head bowed down and his face buried in a pillow, the hand of his child clasped tightly within his own. The night had been sleepless, and nature was overwearied. Complete bodily repose gave power to slumber, and for a few mo-

ments external consciousness faded, and he dreamed that he saw his wife fleeing from the house. So vivid was this dream that, when he started up at the sound of the breakfast-bell, he could not for a few moments pass it aside as an airy vision.

"Where is your mother?" he inquired of the two older children on entering the breakfast-room.

"I don't know," was the answer of both.

Mr. Eldridge turned away and went hastily upstairs, passing from room to room, but in none of them finding the object of his search.

"Harriet!" he called, in a suppressed voice.

"Harriet!" The tones were louder.

"Harriet!" Only echo returned the word.

Mr. Eldridge sat down to think, and, if possible, to force his thoughts into order and coherence.

"What does this mean?" he asked of himself. "Where has she gone? Why has she left the house?"

The truth was suggested, but he flung the suggestion aside as improbable.

"No! no! She is not insane enough for that, violent and wrong-headed as she has sometimes shown herself."

But the suggestion, once made, could not be kept out of his mind. He remembered with what angry violence he had laid his hand upon her, and how fearfully excited she had become. Her last passionate threats and imprecations sounded in his ears as if just flung upon the air, and he perceived in them a meaning not realized before.

"Gracious heavens!" he exclaimed, aloud, as the possibility of her having taken a step destined to prove so disastrous to all their future grew distinct in his thoughts. "It cannot be!"

For a time Mr. Eldridge felt like a man stunned by a heavy blow. There was a pressure on heart and brain. Then all the suffering, disgrace, desolation, disruptions, and bitter experiences, in store for himself and children, were vividly seen; and he groaned aloud, as he looked in imagination upon the sad realities to come.

"Impossible!" he could not help saying. "Harriet is passionate, selfish, and self-willed, but not mad enough to drag down upon herself, her husband, and her children, such utter ruin as this!"

But time glided on, and Mrs. Eldridge did not make her appearance. From the domestic her husband learned that she had left the house a little while after their angry passage of words. This strengthened his worst fears.

Faint from loss of rest and violent mental excitement, Mr. Eldridge, who had taken no food since the day before, felt that he must have something to keep him from sinking. There was brandy in the house; he thought of it, and acted at once upon the thought. The draught taken was large for him and it brought mind and body up to a firmer tone, though reason was left obscured. It was after this stimulus was received, and while partially under its influence, that he set forth in search of his wife, and left for her, with Mrs. Weakly, his indignant ulti-

matum. The fact of her desertion of home at this particular time, when their youngest child needed a mother's devoted care more than at any period since her birth, stood forth to his mind in such revolting deformity that he felt her to be unworthy the name of woman. His whole nature rose up against her.

Mr. Eldridge was in this state of mind when he returned from his hurried visit to the house of Mrs. Weakly in search of his wife. Dr. Penrose and his kind-hearted lady met him at his own door, and went up with him to the room where Katy lay. The poor child had received but few of the attentions she needed. Her room was in order,—so much had been done by the mother's hand; but her bed had not been made, nor had she received any food.

A glance told Mrs. Penrose that something was wrong. She looked around the room, then at the bed and at the child, with her damp, matted hair, and face from which water had not removed the traces of tears.

"I'm afraid this shock has been too much for Mrs. Eldridge, and that she is sick," Mrs. Penrose remarked.

"Worse than that!" Mr. Eldridge spoke in an undertone and half to himself, though his words reached the ears of both the doctor and his wife and startled them by their strange tone and vague significance. Neither of them felt at liberty to question further.

"How is my little girl?" the doctor asked, in a

kind, encouraging voice, as he bent over Katy and laid his hand lightly on her forehead.

"Better," was the simple response.

Such attentions as were needed from the physician were then given Dr. Penrose found her in rather a feverish condition, and, upon the whole, not doing so well as he had hoped to find her. That she had been neglected was too apparent.

Mrs. Penrose gave such personal care to the child as her condition demanded.

"She has had no breakfast," said Mr. Eldridge, aside.

"Indeed! that must be seen to;" and the doctor's wife passed quickly from the room and went down into the kitchen.

"Katy has had nothing to eat this morning," she said to the girl, whom she found sitting by a table, resting thereon her great red arms, and looking both stupid and lazy.

"'Deed and ye may say thot, ma'am; it's mighty little the checkens get when the ould hen won't scratch for 'em."

"The poor child must have some breakfast. Wil you make her a piece of toast?"

"Yis, ma'am, or ony thing else ye'll tell me to do for her, though she is the greatest little possessed I ever did see in my born days. But they say her back is broken. Och! sorra the day for her!"

Mrs. Penrose did not encourage the girl to talk; yet, for all this, by the time she had some toast and tea and a soft-boiled egg ready for Katy, she under-

stood pretty distinctly that there had been a sharp quarrel between Mr. and Mrs. Eldridge, and that the latter had gone off at an early hour and had not yet returned.

Soon after Mrs. Penrose left the sick-room Mr Eldridge drew the doctor into the next apartment, and, when they were there alone, said to him, in a grave, sad way,—

"Dr. Penrose, a thing has just happened which is destined to bring disgrace upon my family and to mar our whole future. My wife has left my house in a fit of passion."

"No! no! surely not, Mr. Eldridge!" said the doctor, startled at the announcement.

"It is too true. Let me relate to you the circumstances just as they occurred."

And Mr. Eldridge repeated what the reader already knows about the conduct of Mrs. Eldridge toward Katy, his own rough interference, and her subsequent withdrawal to the house of Mrs. Weakly, whither he had traced her.

"It is only an outburst of passion, and will soon be over," said the doctor.

"It must be over very soon to avail any thing," said Mr. Eldridge, resolutely. "She has tried me just beyond the point of endurance. If she returns before the sun goes down, well, she may return! But—by all that is sacred!—if she is beyond my threshold at that hour the door is closed against her forever!"

"Speak not rashly," said the doctor. "Above all,

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do not act rashly in so serious a business as this. Your wife, besides being blinded by passion, is in the hands, I fear, of bad advisers."

"I never was more in earnest in my life than I am now," replied Mr. Eldridge, sternly, clenching both hands as he spoke. "Tried for years as few men have been tried, my whole nature is at last stung into revolt. I am not the man I was yesterday. Then I would have temporized as of old, yielded, and forgiven. It is not so now: for good or evil I am changed; and if that mad woman does not return to-day she shall never return!"

"Think of your poor, injured child, who *must* have the tender, patient, never-ceasing care of a mother," said the doctor.

"That she can never have; for heaven has not blessed her with a true mother." The voice of Mr. Eldridge was softer, and trembled slightly. "She has more to hope from the heart of a stranger than from the heart of her who bore her. In all human probability the change will be in her favor."

"But such a change must not be talked of as possible," said Dr. Penrose.

"I fear it is very possible. You do not know Harriet Eldridge as I know her."

"The kind offices of neighbors you will not reject?" said Dr. Penrose.

"I can pledge myself to nothing, doctor. Mrs. Eldridge has my ultimatum. It is with her to accept or reject. If she returns home and acts as a wife and mother should act, all may be well. But if the

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sun goes down this day, and she remain absent after that hour, her fate is sealed. I will have nothing more to do with her."

"Madness! Folly! What has come over you, my good friend?" said the doctor.

"Simply this:—I am at last driven to the wall, and nave turned upon my pursuer!"

"Doctor." It was the voice of Mrs. Penrose, calling from Katy's room. So the hurried interview ended. Mr. Eldridge descended to his office and left the doctor and his wife alone. In about ten minutes the former came down-stairs.

"Katy must have a careful attendant," said he, on meeting Mr. Eldridge. "It will not do for her to be left alone."

"I know that, doctor; but where shall I find the right person?"

"There will be no difficulty, I presume, in procuring a nurse. As I go down the street I will call in and see Mrs. Lamb. She is a kind soul, and will come, no doubt, for a few days. Mrs. Penrose will remain with Katy until she arrives."

The doctor passed on without further remark, eaving the unhappy man alone with his maddening thoughts.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CONSUMMATION.

As the day wore on, the thoughts and feelings of Mr. Eldridge experienced a hundred fluctuations, though never once did he recede from his stern purpose in regard to his wife. There were times when he hoped that she would repent of her rashness and return home ere the sun went down, and times when he desired the present separation to be eternal. He saw little to hope for in any temporary healing of the rupture. Hostile feelings would remain, and hostile acts be resumed, sooner or later. Of all this strife, ungentleness, disorder, and bickering, he was heart-weary. Already imagination had sketched for him a different and more attractive home than the one over which his wife had ruled for years. The new-born love of Katy created a strange, vague, fluttering hope in his over-tried heart. He still felt for her that yearning love which had sprung into existence only a few hours before and which gained fresh vigor every moment. He went out but once during the day, and that only for a little while. Most of the time he was walking the floor of his office, wandering restlessly about the house, or sitting beside Katy, holding one of her hands and looking down lovingly

upon her young face, that had all at once grown singularly gentle in its expression.

Meantime Dr. Penrose and his excellent wife were doing all in their power to effect a reconciliation, or, rather, to induce Mrs. Eldridge to return home. Most of the day Mrs. Penrose passed in the company of Mrs. Eldridge and her two wrong advisers. Mrs. Weakly she succeeded in partially gaining over to her side; but Mrs. Glendy never yielded her view of the case for an instant, declaring that, if Mrs. Eldridge let her foot cross the threshold of her husband's door while he maintained his present threatening attitude, she would disgrace her sex.

The only concession which Mrs. Penrose could gain from the indignant trio was this:—If Mr. Eldridge would withdraw his tyrannical ultimatum and leave his wife free to return at any time she pleased, she might come home in a day or two; perhaps some time during that very evening.

Hopeless of inducing Mrs. Eldridge to recede from this position, Mrs. Penrose, accompanied by her husband, went around to see Mr. Eldridge late in the afternoon. They found him unchanged in his purpose.

"It lacks," said he, in answer to an earnest entreaty to meet with some concession the stubborn pride of his wrongly-counselled wife, "but one hour to sunset. If she return before that time, well. If absent, the door is closed against her forever! I have said it once and again; and, by all that is evil and good, I will keep my word! She says that I

struck her. The charge is as false as her own heart! That is the crowning outrage. No, no, kind friends! I am deeply grateful for the interest you have taken, and shall never forget it while life lasts."

"But think of your children," urged Mrs. Penrose, feebly, for little hope of making any impression remained.

"If I have wavered at all in my purpose," was firmly answered, "the thought of my children has inspired me with new resolution. She has been no true mother, and it is best for them to be at once and forever removed from her influence."

The sun went down, and Mrs. Eldridge was still absent from the home of her husband. He had waited, in feverish restlessness, up to the fatal moment. It came, and passed.

"God help us all!"

The words fell impulsively from the lips of Mr. Eldridge, as, with a desperate effort to give force to his purpose, he shut the door of his house and locked it with a resolute hand.

"God help us all!" he repeated, as he walked back along the passage. He had only gone a few paces, when the bell rung violently.

"Too late!" he muttered, between his teeth "Too late! The sun has gone down, and the door is shut. Too late! Too late! God help us all!"

His manner was that of a person half insane.

The bell rung once more. The servant came to answer it, but Mr. Eldridge waved her back.

"No! no!" And he shook his clenched hand to-

ward the door. "The sun is down, and it is shut! I said that it would be so! Go your own way! The world is wide enough for both you and me. Henceforth our paths diverge."

Mr. Eldridge stood still. The beating of his heart was audible in his own ears. All was silent as death.

"She was but a moment too late," was whispered in his thoughts. "Not a moment, it may be. She has come at the time, and you must keep your word."

The heart of Mr. Eldridge began to yield; he moved a pace or two in the direction of the door, and then paused. Again the bell was rung, but more feebly. The diminished hope indicated by this less-confident summons had the right effect, and something of pity for his repentant wife was stirred in his bosom.

"It is well, perhaps," he murmured, as he kept on toward the door. His hand was on the key; and, as he turned the bolts of the lock, the bell-wire rattled again, and the low sound of the distant ringing bell came faintly to his ears.

"The agony is over!" It was his mental ejaculation as he slowly opened the door,—all the powers of his mind in exercise to repress the strong agitation that was nearly overmastering him.

"Has she returned?" A voice, trembling between hope and fear, asked the question.

Mr. Eldridge leaned against the door to support himself.

"Yes! yes! I am sure she has come back!" Mrs. Penrose spoke eagerly.

"She is not here?" Mr. Eldridge shook his head slowly, and there was deep sadness in his voice.

Mrs. Penrose seemed stunned. A moment or two she stood with pale cheeks and eyes cast upon the ground. Then, uttering fervently, yet in a despairing voice,—

"God help you all!" she turned away and went hurriedly homeward.

"Amen!" came from the lips of Mr. Eldridge as he shut the door. "Amen! God help us all!"

CHAPTER XXII.

A TRUE WOMAN'S INFLUENCE.

A DEATH in the house could not have wrought a deeper change in the inmates than did this unhappy event. The feeling of each member toward the absent mother was such as we feel toward the "departed." There was a strange stillness about the dwelling. William and Jacob, who had a few times asked where their mother was and when she would return, ceased their inquiries, for the answers were grave and unsatisfactory, burdening their young thoughts with an oppressive mystery. Their strife ceased; their bearing was more quiet, and they talked with each other in lower tones. When they

came into Katy's room it was with noiseless steps; and when they looked into her face new and gentler feelings moved over their young hearts. The dislike and antagonism with which they had always met her heretofore were gone now, and something of vague wonder was in their hearts at the change. It was their sister Katy; and yet not the same Katy. They could not understand it all; but they saw her with different eyes, and felt toward her as they had never felt before.

Something was due to Mrs. Lamb, the nurse of Katy, for this milder aspect of affairs. She was a loving, gentle, wise, and right-hearted woman, and felt deep pity for the abandoned children. The sphere of her true quality was felt by all who came near to her. No one trifled with Mrs. Lamb; yet she wore not a grave countenance. No one felt like indulging in ill-humor or unkindly feelings toward others when she was present; yet she rarely rebuked by words the evil that was manifested in her presence.

The influence of such a woman, at such a time, could not fail to be for good. Wisely, yet not from thought, but in obedience to the true instincts of her character, did she adapt herself to the state of things around her. Toward the two boys she at once manifested an interest which they felt to be genuine, and which drew them nearer to her and gave her power over them. Particularly did she endeavor, in the beginning, to awaken in their hearts genuine pity for their little sister. This proved no difficult

task; for the change in Katy had a softening influence on all who came near her.

In a few days order reigned where every thing had been disorder. Yet had there been no repression of evils with a strong hand, no formal external dispositions, no assumption of rule.

Mr. Eldridge came in and went out, a silent and, for most of the time, an apparently absent-minded man. He took but little notice of any of the children, except Katy; and to her he spoke but few words; but the tone in which these words were uttered was very tender. And, whenever he came into the chamber where she lay, something held him there so strongly that often he had to force himself from the child's presence.

The injury which Katy had sustained proved quite as bad as the doctor's worst apprehensions. There was a permanent displacement of one of the vertebræ, and the little girl was hopelessly deformed.

Days and weeks came and went, but the mother did not return nor make the smallest movement toward a reconciliation. Mrs. Lamb, who had consented to take charge of Katy as a temporary arrangement, found herself becoming so necessary to the comfort and integrity of Mr. Eldridge's family that the prospect of separation therefrom, except by something like a violent breaking away and an abandonment of duties that it seemed imperative on her to discharge, looked every day more and more remote. In Katy's heart another new love had been born,—the earnest, confiding, deep love of

the child for a mother. Until now she had never known the gentle, untiring, self-devoted, tender care with which some children are blessed from the hour consciousness dawns on their young minds. It was a new, joyful experience for her, and bound her to Mrs. Lamb with an affection that gained new strength with every hour. William and Jacob found in her a friend whose ears were always open to them and whose hands were always ready to supply their wants; a wise counsellor and gentle harmonizer when strife arose between them; a teacher and leader to good at all times. Gradually they came to confide in her, and soon to love her, with childlike tenderness.

This great change in his household Mr. Eldridge felt, and, as far as his unhappy condition of mind would permit, enjoyed. But he was changed in passing through the recent violent strife, and not altogether for the better. The conduct of his wife he felt as a disgrace to himself and family. She had distinctly charged that he had lifted his hand against her,—a falsehood that he knew half of the people in Arden believed. To strike a woman he had always held to be the deed of a human brute. And, now, to have that last act of progressive abandonment of true manliness charged upon him maddened or hopelessly depressed his feelings according as opposite states of mind found rule.

Judge Gray, when he heard of the domestic trouble of Mr. Eldridge, offered him, in an earnest,

friendly way, his sympathy, and such counsel as it might be in his power to give, and succeeded in drawing the unhappy man quite within the circle of his dangerous influence.

"Come and see me often," was the invariable njunction when they separated. "I wish you to egard me as your interested friend," was often said.

Eldridge gradually lost the feeling of repulsion he had experienced toward the judge, and took more and more pleasure in the nocturnal associations and employments into which his more intimate acquaintance naturally introduced him. Craig he found an almost constant visitor at the house of Judge Gray; and the good understanding that evidently existed between them was a fact that more than puzzled him. Could it be possible that the judge knew the real character of the man in whom he seemed to confide and admitted to so close an intimacy? Over and over again did Mr. Eldridge ask himself this question. If this were really so, then the judge was a false and a dangerous man in the community The conclusion was irresistible.

It was not long before Eldridge was tempted into another trial of skill with Craig. He was moved thereto by the hope of making up losses, in providing for which he had been compelled to sacrifice a piece of property that in a few years would have increased in value to double the sum he obtained for it. Judge Gray was the purchaser; and Craig made no objection to receive his note of hand, payable

twelve months after date, in liquidation of the lawyer's debt of honor.

A few light winnings stimulated Eldridge to renewed contests; and in the end he was the loser again, to a serious extent. It was a rare thing now for him to remain at home during the evening. There was no social life there to attract him. Before his wife went away, ungenial as she contrived to make every thing, he felt a certain obligation to stay at home, even if he spent the time in reading or remained in his office. He was domestic in his feelings and home-loving; and, while the wife-centre was there, he yielded to the attraction, feeble as it was. Toward Katy his love continued to grow daily into a deeper feeling than usually exists between a father and his child. He always went to her room first, on coming home, and rarely left the house without looking in to say a parting word or to leave a kiss upon her lips. But he had wants and cravings beyond what his child could meet; and he went forth, evening after evening, like the dove from the ark, seeking a resting-place for his heart, but finding none. Ah! if, like the dove, he had come back as innocent as when he went forth!

And so time wore on. The only change for the better was in the children, whom the passionate mother had abandoned, but who had found a wiser, truer, more loving friend than she. It was wonderful how orderly, how gentle, how apparently unselfish, they had grown; how a mild word from Mrs. Lamb would lead them instantly into obedience.

Strong language, threats, angry denunciation, and even blows, had spurred them to rebellion; but now a gentle reproof or mild admonition, coming to their ears in tones of love, subdued them instantly.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FALSE FRIENDS TRIED.

Of the position, purposes, and movements of his wife Mr. Eldridge remained entirely ignorant. He made no inquiries in that direction, and no one ventured to communicate with him on a subject of so much delicacy.

For a few days Mrs. Eldridge remained domiciled with her very particular friend Mrs. Weakly, keeping her room all the time. Then she went to the house of Mrs. Glendy, on invitation, that she might come into closer communication with that lady and get the benefit of her larger experience in life and wiser counsel. That she was very unhappy need not be told. If she had been left to herself, she would have returned home ere the sun went down, much as pride revolted at the tyrannical threat of her husband. Under other circumstances she would not have regarded such a threat as having in it any meaning; but she felt now that her husband's stern words were not idle utterances; and when the day closed in darkness her troubled heart was sadly con

scious that a great gulf was between her and the home from which she had gone forth in anger.

Mrs. Weakly's enthusiasm for her friend did not continue to burn with the ardor felt in the beginning. The business of separating a wife from her husband was likely to involve more consequences than, in her thoughtlessness, she had at first imagined. In the interviews which she had held with Mrs. Penrose during the exciting day on which the doctor's wife had used all the influence she possessed to bring about a reconciliation, many things were said that did not die in the memory of Mrs. Weakly, but presented themselves for consideration in calmer moments.

As a visiting friend she had found Mrs. Eldridge very agreeable. She could drop in upon her, when she was in the mood, and gossip away for an hour or so to her heart's content,—her pride gratified, the while, in seeing that she was winning over to her own way of thinking a woman of some spirit, whose domestic relations were clogs upon her freedom, and who had a husband very much inclined, as most men are, to question a wife's right to do in all things just as she pleases. They could talk and laugh and sip a glass of wine together, feel exceedingly agreeable, and vow in their hearts an eternal friendship.

But things were considerably changed now. The day of these pleasant meetings was over. The eyes that danced in smiles were now drowned in tears; the lips that parted in merry laughter rigid with

anger, despondency, or grief; the cheerful voice veiled in sadness or made repulsive through selfish complainings. The light heart of Mrs. Weakly grew weary under such a pressure. It was for her altogether a new experience. Not very long was she in coming to the conclusion that she had been something mistaken in Mrs. Eldridge,—that she was a selfish, tiresome woman. From the beginning she had not been altogether satisfied about the abandonment of her injured child only a few hours after the sad accident which had made it a cripple for life, even though her friend acted in accordance with her own impulsive advice. The more she looked at this fact the less did she like the aspect it presented; and, as the common sentiment, whenever it came to her ears, was in agreement with her own thoughts, the work of coldness, even to partial alienation, went steadily on.

What did Mrs. Eldridge propose doing? What were her views in regard to individual independence? What her plans for the future? These were the questions that soon began to arise in the mind of Mrs. Weakly; and she did not hesitate to press them upon her unhappy friend, much to her bewilderment, if not dismay. Every hour Mrs. Eldridge saw the sky growing darker over her head and the way before her more uncertain.

Mrs. Glendy's enthusiasm in the case did not begin to die out as quickly as that of Mrs. Weakly. She had a strong-minded woman's grudge against the other sex, and, when a good opportunity to make

her power felt against any man was offered, embraced it with eagerness. The rough, imperative manner in which Mr. Eldridge interrogated her on his recent visit to her house in search of his wife had excited her indignation, and left her mind in a condition to believe almost any thing that was charged against him as a domestic tyrant. She was, therefore, prepared to give Mrs. Eldridge aid and comfort in her warfare against tyranny, and to make her house, at least for a time, a place of refuge for the oppressed. So, in a few days, Mrs. Eldrigde passed from the dwelling of Mrs. Weakly to that of Mrs. Glendy. In parting from Mrs. Weakly she had a humiliating consciousness that the lady felt herself relieved by the change; and this was true.

Weeks glided by, every succeeding day throwing a veil of deeper sobriety over the feelings of Mrs. Eldridge. Long ere this she had believed that overtures of reconciliation would come from her husband. Long ere this she had looked for and desired such overtures. But they came not. Mrs. Weakly, who moved about all the while among the people of Arden, carefully gathered up for her friend all the intelligence about her family that was floating from lip to lip. The unvarying testimony was that under the care of the good Mrs. Lamb wonderful changes were being wrought in the temper and conduct of the children, and that now peace and order reigned where once the ear was forever jarred by sounds of discord. Katy was still in bed, and the worst that had been feared for her was in-

evitable. She was doomed to be a cripple for life. But every one spoke in admiration of her patience, of the unvarying gentleness of her temper, and of the strong affection that was growing up between her and her father.

Like sharp stings came all this to the heart of Mrs Eldridge; for selfish pride felt it as a rebuke, and the fact would, she saw, make in the common mind an impression against her. Oh, how many times, in her lonely and sleepless hours, did she wish herself back in the home she had so madly deserted! But the door had been shut against her, and she felt that it was shut forever.

What of the future? Ah, that question could not be set aside! But how was it to be answered? What resources had she to fall back upon? Where was she to go? What other home had she in the wide, wide world? Father and mother had passed, many years before, into the other world. Her only sister had stepped aside from the ways of virtue, and might, for all she knew, long since have departed to her account. An aunt, the sister of her father, a widow in humble life, resided in a small village about sixty miles from Arden. This aunt she had not seen nor held any communication with since childhood; and now the thought of her, as her mind groped about for some friend and place of refuge, brought no quicker heart-beat. Aunt Margaret! Yes, that was the old lady's name. Mrs. Eldridge had almost forgotten it; and the image and character of her relative were quite as indistinct as her name. No light dawned

in that direction; and the unhappy woman, after thinking a little while about Aunt Margaret, put the thought of her aside, feeling sadder than before.

Mrs. Eldridge had been in the house of Mrs. Glendy only a short time, when some things occurred that startled her. A good many visitors came and went, particularly in the evening. She saw none of these; for the reason of her presence in the house was also a reason why she kept herself entirely secluded. During the evening she rarely saw Mrs. Glendy, who was occupied with company. The voices of men and women were heard in the hum of conversation up to a late hour. Mrs. Eldridge understood pretty clearly the meaning of this; for she had a very distinct remembrance of certain company she had met there and of certain occupations that engaged them. She had herself taken a hand at cards and lost and won several small sums of money.

One day, not very long after Mrs. Eldridge's removal to the house of Mrs. Glendy, she was sitting alone in a small parlor on the second story, where she felt entirely free from all intrusion, when she was surprised by hearing the steps of a man ascending the stairs. The blood rushed back to her heart, and she felt for a moment or two as if she would suffocate. Could it be her husband? Along the passage came the footsteps, slow but firm. The door was opened; and the man Craig, whom she had met at Mrs. Glendy's once or twice, came in! He paused, after advancing a few feet into the room, saying,—

"I beg your pardon, ma'am, for this intrusion; but I have a word or two to say that you may be glad to hear."

There was a blending of respect and familiarity in his manner. Mrs. Eldridge arose hastily, her face flushing and her manner confused.

"Where is Mrs. Glendy?" she asked.

"In the parlor, with company. I would not have ventured upon this apparent rudeness had she not been engaged. Be seated, madam. I have only a word or two to say."

And he came a step or two nearer.

"I have seen your husband and held a long conversation with him. Many things that were said I cannot repeat. But there are some remarks that were made, touching yourself, that I feel it imperative upon me to communicate,—if you will hear them."

The color receded from the face of Mrs. Eldridge; and, for want of strength to stand, she dropped back into the chair from which she had arisen.

"Your husband is very bitter against you."

Craig, as he made this remark, quietly seated himself a few feet from Mrs. Eldridge, and leaned toward her, with his evil eyes fixed upon her countenance. She did not reply; for surprise kept her silent.

"I have met Mr. Eldridge a number of times since the late unhappy event, and he has talked with me freely as a friend. We are on terms of close inti-

macy, and have been for years. I know his whole heart."

Craig paused to note the effect of his words, still keeping his eyes upon the face of Mrs. Eldridge.

"I cannot approve his action in the present case," he went on, "and I have not hesitated to tell him so freely, at the risk of giving offence."

The chair of Craig was drawn a little nearer, and his tone fell to a lower key. Mrs. Eldridge sat immovable, with her eyes upon the floor, but, it was plain to be seen, listening eagerly.

"To-day we talked the matter over again, and I insisted that he should come to you and have all differences at once and forever reconciled."

The eyes of Mrs. Eldridge were lifted quickly to the face of her visitor; but the look she encountered checked for an instant the beating of her heart and sent a low shudder through her frame.

"But," added Craig, with affected indignation, "he remained as hard as granite and as immovable as the mountains. Nothing but your utter humiliation, madam, will satisfy him. *You* must come to *him!*" There was contempt in the man's tones.

One point was gained. The tempter succeeded in arousing the pride of Mrs. Eldridge. The angry blood came back to her pale face, flushing it to a scarlet hue.

"But," added Craig, in a lower voice, "I have felt it but a common duty to bear to you even this information, hard as it is. There are vital interests at stake. This estrangement and separation must not

continue. One of you must yield first. As he remains so stubborn, so haughty, so self-determined, the overtures for reconciliation had better come from you; and I am here now to suggest this course of action."

"Never!" exclaimed Mrs. Eldridge, passionately. Never! If he expects to humiliate Harriet Eldridge, he will find himself in the end largely mistaken. I thought he knew me better."

"So did I; and I told him so. But nothing less than submission will satisfy his lordly nature. I am out of all patience with the man!"

"He will never be satisfied to the end of his life," replied Mrs. Eldridge, in a voice that was hoarse with indignation.

"While I must admire your spirit," said Craig, in an insinuating voice, "I cannot but counsel a more yielding temper on your part. This separation ought not to continue,—must not continue. It is cursing both your lives. For the sake of your husband——"

"Enough, sir! I thank you for the good office you have undertaken; but influence in this direction is hopeless, if there is to be no movement toward concession on the other side."

"There certainly will be none, madam. I know your husband and his views too completely to leave me any room for hope."

"Very well," said Mrs. Eldridge, resolutely. "My pride and endurance are quite equal to his, as he will find, it may be, to his sorrow."

"He says," remarked Craig, affecting to speak with some indifference of manner, "that your absence has changed nothing at home for the worse:—that, in fact, every thing goes on in a pleasanter, more orderly manner, and that the children have acquired new characters since you left. He seems charmed with the rule of that soft, gentle, insinuating Mrs. Lamb,—a woman I never did like. She has the noiseless, stealthy tread of a cat!"

The desired effect was produced. The words of Craig stung the spirit of Mrs. Eldridge into temporary madness. All the darker passions of her nature were aroused.

"Mrs. Lamb!" she ejaculated, in a tone of bitter contempt.

"Yes, Mrs. Lamb." The manner in which Craig repeated the name increased instead of allaying the wild disturbance of mind he had aimed to create, and in doing which he had been entirely successful.

"Was she a frequent visitor at your house?" he inquired, in a voice of covert meaning.

"No!" was strongly answered.

"Mrs. Eldridge," (Craig's manner suddenly underwent an entire change. He spoke in a low, serious tone of voice, and leaned nearer as he spoke;) "I wish you to regard me in this matter as a friend. My attachment for your husband first interested me in the case; and, at the outset, hearing only his side of the story, I must confess that I thought you altogether to blame. From his own showing I was at first led to question this conclusion; and, the mo-

ment I began to question, my eyes were opened. A woman cannot bear every thing."

"No, Mr. Craig; not if she have in her the true spirit of a woman," said Mrs. Eldridge, indignantly.

"So I have said to him. But he disgusted me with his answer. 'A wife must obey,' he answered."

"Obey! Give me patience!" The excited woman stamped upon the floor.

"You may well say, 'Give me patience!'" The voice of Craig was not meant to soothe the irritation he had occasioned. "As I have just remarked, a woman cannot bear every thing, and should not."

There was a pause of some moments. Mrs. Eldridge sat with her eyes upon the floor, while Craig gazed on her intently.

"You will not concede any thing?" said the tempter.

"Nothing! He will find in me no variableness nor shadow of turning. I will be iron toward him, unless he bend first."

"I like your spirit, but fear the consequences."

"I have great endurance, Mr. Craig. You may cut me into pieces; but I will not yield my purpose."

"I see, then, no present hope of a reconciliation.'

"I fear there is none," said Mrs. Eldridge.

"What, then, of the future?" Craig asked the question in a way that threw the mind of Mrs. Eldridge into entire confusion. Alas! how dark was all the future! She did not answer, but sat, as before, with her eyes cast down.

"Have you relatives," inquired Craig, "to whom you can go in your present unhappy extremity?"

Mrs. Eldridge shook her head. Had she looked up suddenly into the face that was bending nearer, he would have seen a ray of satisfaction glancing over its unpleasant outlines.

"No tried friends?"

"None."

A bright gleam shot over the countenance of Craig.

"Mrs. Glendy is a noble-minded woman; you will find her a true friend. I know how deeply she feels for your wrongs."

"I am under great obligations for her disinterested kindness," said Mrs. Eldridge, mournfully.

"You may trust her implicitly."

Almost unperceived by Mrs. Eldridge, Craig had continued to draw the chair upon which he was seated nearer and nearer, and now, as he uttered the last sentence, he laid his hand upon her arm. The touch sent a thrill of repulsion through her whole being, and she sprung to her feet with a sudden impulse, stepping back a pace or two, and exclaiming,—

"Leave me, sir, this instant!"

"Mrs. Eldridge!" Craig also started to his feet; for the sudden, indignant movement of Mrs. Eldridge had surprised him almost as much as his act of familiarity had surprised the lady.

"Leave me, sir!" The words were repeated in a stern voice.

"But, my dear madam ——"

Mrs. Eldridge waved her hand imperatively.

"If you do not leave the room instantly I will call down to Mrs. Glendy."

But Craig, who was recovering from his first surprise, showed no disposition to obey. He only receded some distance from the indignant woman, and assumed a respectful manner.

"Take your chair, Mrs. Eldridge," he said, coolly. "My earnestness in your cause, as the unhappy wife of a friend highly regarded but in error, has led me to a seeming familiarity where none was intended. I do not leave, as you command me to do, on the instant, because I am anxious to serve you and will not let feeling come in to paralyze my good purposes. Calm yourself!"

Mrs. Eldridge, seeing that the man purposed to remain, and having no further desire to listen to any thing he might have to say, went quickly from the room and passed to her own private apartment, where she locked herself in.

She had been alone for some twenty minutes, when there was a light tap on her door.

"Who is there?" she called.

"Mrs. Eldridge!" It was the voice of Mrs. Glendy.

The door was opened instantly, and Mrs. Glendy stepped into the room. Her face wore a pleasant aspect. As she took the chair offered her by Mrs. Eldridge, she said, smiling,—

"What has my good friend Mr. Craig been saying

to offend you? He tells me that he has been so unfortunate as unwittingly to arouse your indignation against him."

"He presumed upon a familiarity that no gentleman would venture to take under the circumstances The act of coming unannounced to the room where I believed myself free from intrusion was in itself an outrage."

"Oh, dear! no, Mrs. Eldridge! It was the thoughtless act of an earnest-minded man, over-eager to serve you. I was engaged at the time, and could not come up with him. He would have waited until I was disengaged; but I urged him to see you, saying that I knew you too well to fear for his right reception. Indeed, Mrs. Eldridge, you have entirely misapprehended him. Mr. Craig is a man of unselfish impulses, and has taken up your cause in the warmest manner. I cannot tell you how deeply grieved he is that you should have misconceived his intentions."

Mrs. Eldridge was silent.

"He is still here," added Mrs. Glendy. "Will you see him in my presence?"

"No," was the firm answer.

A shade of disappointment dimmed the face of Mrs. Glendy.

"You are not in earnest, my dear Mrs. Eldridge?"

"I am entirely so. The man's conduct admits of no excuse."

"Oh, dear!" laughed Mrs. Glendy, "what a strange body you are! Well, well; you'll see better in time,

and, in the end, know your friends better. You will not give Mr. Craig an opportunity to explain himself?"

"Not to-day. My feelings are too much disturbed and my mind in too great confusion."

"A reason that Mr. Craig must receive as valid," said Mrs. Glendy, cheerfully. "The man hasn't much tact," she added, "but he is all right at heart. I know him like a book."

Excusing herself, in a little while, Mrs. Glendy left the apartment, and Mrs. Eldridge was again alone. There was something in the manner of Mrs. Glendy during this short interview that left a vaguely-unpleasant impression on her mind,—something that was like the lifting of a veil, giving a sudden glimpse of things erst hidden from sight, yet too brief for distinct vision. Her earnest apology for Craig did not remove a single feeling of repulsion from the mind of Mrs. Eldridge, but rather involved the apologist. Why should *she* take up the man's case so warmly?

"I have indeed fallen upon evil days," murmured the wretched woman, as clouds drew thicker around her. "Where am I, and whither am I going?"

But there came no answer to questions that intruded themselves unbidden and almost clamored for a reply.

What of the future? No echo came back from the impenetrable darkness beyond.

CHAPTER XXIV.

TOO LATE.

"We'll bring all that down in good time," said Mrs. Glendy, speaking to herself, as she left the room of the excited and indignant Mrs. Eldridge. "There's some prudery remaining, but it will die out! Craig has too little tact and too little patience. She's a woman of spirit, and no mistake! Time works wonderful changes, and we'll see what we shall see."

And with these vague utterances she descended to the parlor, where the man Craig awaited her return.

"Well, how did you find her?" he inquired, in a light manner.

"Spicy," replied Mrs. Glendy.

"She's a keen one, and no mistake, now: isn't she?"

"There's stuff about her."

"You may well say that. Eldridge met his match in her, I'm thinking," said Craig.

"He did, and just such a match as all men of his character should meet. I like to see your would-be domestic tyrants catch a Tartar sometimes."

"She has teeth and claws, I take it," was remarked, in a coarse manner.

"As you will find unless you treat her very gingerly," said Mrs. Glendy, with quite as vulgar an air as that of her companion.

But we cannot soil our pages with a further record of their conversation. Before parting, a system of treatment for Mrs. Eldridge was settled upon which it was believed would bend her to their purposes.

The miserable woman was left entirely alone during the remainder of the day. When supper was announced she asked to have a cup of tea sent to her room, which was done. There appeared to be many visitors at the house during the evening, and she heard the murmur of a good deal of conversation carried on, it seemed to her, in subdued voices and at no great distance from the apartment she occupied. Mrs. Glendy did not visit her again during that day or evening. They met at breakfast-time on the next morning, and Mrs. Eldridge felt instantly that her friend was changed toward her. Mrs. Glendy smiled and bowed courteously, and had a pleasant word, as before; but the smile was colder, the manner not so bland, and the utterance void of heartiness. A certain formality and approach to embarrassment could not fail to arise.

After breakfast Mrs. Glendy took her unhappy friend by the arm, and said, as they walked together from the dining-room,—

"Have you given your future any serious thought yet, Mrs. Eldridge?"

"I have thought of little else for the last two days," was the almost mournful answer.

"What are your plans and purposes? I ask as a friend deeply interested in your welfare."

"Plans? purposes?" Mrs. Eldridge was bewildered.

"Yes. You have taken the very decisive step of separation from your husband. That was as it should be. You acted like a woman of spirit, as you are; but a step like this is only the entrance upon a new path in life. There are many steps beyond before the journey's end is reached. Have you not thought of this?"

Tears sprung to the eyes of Mrs. Eldridge; her lips quivered as she essayed to answer, but there was no vocal answer.

"You must pardon me for intruding upon you a subject that is painful and unwelcome," said Mrs. Glendy. "It is only the act of true friendship. You are now alone in the world, as regards your husband; and you must stand alone and walk alone with the same womanly independence that led you to throw off the chains of a tyrant. What of your family connections? Are there relatives with whom you can find a home?"

Mrs. Eldridge shook her head.

"Then you are entirely alone in the world?"

"Entirely."

Mrs. Glendy bent her eyes upon the floor, and appeared to muse for some time.

"I thought you had a brother living?" she at length remarked.

"I never had a brother," was replied.

"I'm certain I heard somebody say so. But it was a mistake, of course. You have no sister, either?"

"None."

"Well," (Mrs. Glendy spoke in a lighter tone,) "there is one advantage in all this:—there'll be no one to assume the right of fault-finding or interference, let you do what you will. Your own inclinings may be your rule of action."

"And they, I trust, will always lead me to do right," said Mrs. Eldridge, promptly; for she could not help feeling that the woman by her side was assuming the character of a tempter.

"Of course," was the ready answer. "But your own free determinations must be your rule of right. With all the drawbacks of your position, it has at least this great advantage:—you can choose your own sphere of life, and no lip will be parted to utter a yea or a nay. Such freedom is worth gaining at almost any sacrifice."

Mrs. Eldridge made no response.

"What skill have you?" inquired Mrs. Glendy. They had reached the parlor and were now sitting together on a sofa.

"Skill? How? I do not clearly take your meaning," said the perplexed woman.

"What was the character of your education? Thorough?"

Mrs. Eldridge shook her head, as she sighed out the word, "Superficial."

"You may have a good knowledge of music, qualifying you for the position of a teacher?"

How coldly fell these words upon the heart of Mrs. Eldridge!

"I never had a taste for music." The voice was husky and choking.

"How in regard to French?" pursued the querist.

"I speak no language beside my native tongue."

"What of drawing?"

"I was never taught the rudiments."

"Unfortunate!" Mrs. Glendy shook her head and looked sober. "If you cannot teach or impart some accomplishment, the way before you is a difficult one. But there must be self-dependence at all hazards, if you even have to take the position of plain seamstress in some family."

Mrs. Eldridge started at the suggestion and looked up with flashing eyes.

"Do not be offended with me," said Mrs. Glendy, blandly. "My task is in no way agreeable. But the difficulty is a serious one, and I am earnest in my desire to help you. What will you do?"

"Leave your house within an hour," was the unexpected answer that came almost indignantly from the lips of Mrs. Eldridge, "if my presence is in the slightest degree an unwelcome one!" It came so unlooked-for that Mrs. Glendy was stung and thrown off of her guard, answering, without time for reflection,—

"As you please about that, madam!"

And she arose with an angry stain on her cheeks.

Mrs. Eldridge arose also, and the two women went from the room by separate doors. Ten minutes afterward the latter left the house; but where was she going? Hurriedly she moved down the street. Had she taken the desperate resolution to return home, submit herself to her husband, and find a place of refuge in her own family? Be that as it may, she had walked only a short distance, when, on looking up from the ground, she saw Mr. Eldridge approaching and but a few paces in advance. His eyes were fixed coldly and sternly upon her. Instantly her steps were arrested, and she stood still, the power to move being for the moment gone. But there was not the slightest pause on the part of Mr. Eldridge, nor any sign of recognition. He stalked on, and passed his wife, noticing her presence only by his stern repellant looks.

The steps of poor Mrs. Eldridge were unsteady as she moved forward again. A little way beyond was the house of Mrs. Weakly, and into this she turned; not that she looked for a warm welcome, but where else could she go?

She was met by her friend with an exclamation of painful surprise; and no wonder, for her face was pale as ashes. Mrs. Eldridge tried to speak, but the power of utterance was gone. She had only time to get fairly within the house when she fainted.

"Trouble!" Muttered Mrs. Weakly, in a fretful voice, as she assisted the domestic whom she had called to carry the insensible body of Mrs. Eldridge

up to one of her chambers. "I wonder why she didn't stay where she was!"

As a matter of course, with feelings that prompted such a remark, Mrs. Weakly was not over-cordial toward Mrs. Eldridge when the latter was restored to consciousness. What had occurred at Mrs. Glendy's was related; but Mrs. Weakly thought that her friend had looked at things through an exaggerated medium, and urged her to go back again and advise more earnestly with Mrs. Glendy as to the future.

"My feet will never cross her threshold again!' said Mrs. Eldridge, in a voice that showed her to be altogether in earnest.

"What, then, do you intend doing?" The question was asked without delicacy or hesitation.

"Heaven knows! The way is very dark before me." And Mrs. Eldridge caught her breath to keep down her feelings.

"I would cheerfully give you a home," said Mrs. Weakly; "but my husband is strongly prejudiced against you, and would not consent to your remaining in the house. He is very angry at the part I have taken in your favor, and we have had warm words on the subject several times already. Should he find you here on his return he will be outrageous. I never knew him to take on so about any thing in my life. Oh, dear! What is to be done I know not. I wish——"

But the little woman caught herself and kept back the words that were leaping into thoughtless

utterance. Her tone and manner were, however, very unpleasant.

Poor Mrs. Eldridge felt crushed to the earth and helpless. So much for her very dear friends who had so warmly encouraged her to separate from her husband!

"I ask only one favor of you, Mrs. Weakly." She spoke in a subdued, almost humble, voice, pausing for a response.

"Name it," returned the friend. The little words were not over-cordially spoken.

"The privilege of remaining in your house three days. After that I will trouble you no longer with my unwelcome presence."

"Now, Mrs. Eldridge! How can you utter such language, and to me?" exclaimed Mrs. Weakly. "As if I had changed toward you! Unwelcome presence! I feel hurt by your words."

"It was not in my heart to wound," said Mrs. Eldridge, still speaking in a low, troubled voice. "But I cannot hide the fact that I am no longer to you or others what I was a few short weeks ago. Let that, however, pass. All I desire is that you will grant me the small favor of a home for three days. After that I will go forth, never again to return."

"My dear Mrs. Eldridge, I answer 'yes, yes,' and without an instant's hesitation," replied Mrs. Weakly, greatly relieved at this moderate stipulation; for she had begun to fear that her friend was about to fall back upon her and Mrs. Glendy a helpless burden.

"It will grieve me," said Mrs. Eldridge, "if my

brief presence in your house should cause any thing unpleasant between you and your husband."

"Oh, as to that,' answered Mrs. Weakly, "my husband can be made to hear reason. I'll manage him. It will only be for three days at most."

Three days at most! There was more of satisfaction in the tone with which these words were uttered than Mrs. Weakly dreamed that she was betraying.

The three days passed quickly. Not very intimate or cordial was the intercourse of the friends during the time. Mrs. Eldridge was reserved; and Mrs. Weakly did not ply her with curious questions, for her interest in the future of the woman she had helped to lead astray from the path in which her feet should now be walking went but little beyond the three days.

The first act of Mrs. Eldridge was to transmit a brief note to her husband, desiring him to send her clothing and a small sum of money. Her messenger returned with word that in an hour all she asked would be ready.

What an hour of suspense that was to the wretched woman! How many thoughts, suggestions, hopes, and fears, agitated her mind. Would her husband make any written communication? Would he send her even a verbal message? Oh, if he would but speak one kind word! On that word she would fly back to him, burying all indignation and self-will beneath the ruins of her humbled pride. How weak and helpless she felt! How powerless to

go forth into the world and engage single-handed in the battle of life!

At the expiration of the hour, punctual to the very minute, the messenger went back. From the time he left until his return Mrs. Eldridge sat at the window of her room, which looked out upon the street, waiting his appearance with a disturbed, eager, questioning spirit. How much was suspended on a single thread that might snap in an instant!

The messenger returned. Mrs. Eldridge saw two large trunks deposited on the pavement. How heavily her sad heart sunk down! how weak she became! A momentary faintness made her eyes grow dim. But hope sprung up again and fluttered its weak wings eagerly. The messenger drew a letter from his pocket and came toward the door. Until that missive reached her hand Mrs. Eldridge scarcely breathed. The calmness with which she broke the seal and unfolded the sheet of paper it contained was superhuman. A moment after it dropped from her hand, her form shrinking down as if a heavy weight had been laid upon her shoulders. Her head sunk upon her bosom, and she sat the image of weak despair.

Not a single line had her husband written! There was an enclosure of one hundred dollars; but not a word of rebuke, forgiveness, or counsel. The dead, blank silence crushed down upon her like hopeless fate.

CHAPTER XXV.

NEW SCENES AND CHARACTERS.

We change the scene from Arden. Many miles away, in the pleasant town of Bloomfield, lived a woman far advanced in years, named Mrs. Angell. She was a widow, with an only and widowed daughter, who had come home to her in the dark days of her bereavement, broken in health and spirits and burdened with four young children. Mrs. Angell owned a small house and a few acres of ground, and had, besides, a yearly income of three hundred dollars secured to her during the term of her natural life.

Twelve years had passed since Phœbe, the daughter, young, beautiful, and full of joyful hope in the future, went forth a bride from the home of her mother, and left the heart of that mother sad and desolate; for Phœbe was the very light of her life. Now she returned, the freshness of her youth gone, her spirits broken, and her weary heart sighing for rest and peace, even if they were found only in the grave. And thitherward her steps were indeed tending; nor was the journey to be long.

"Dear mother! Dear home!" How full of emotion was the voice that uttered these words, repeated over and over again, and for days after Phœbe's re-

turn. For a time it seemed to her almost as if she were dreaming; and she would shut her eyes and try to bring the present reality into distinct appreciation.

"Dear mother! dear home!" She had no other words but these to express her feelings. Ah! since he went out from her home and her mother life had assumed new aspects. For a time the sky was clearer and the days went down in greater beauty, leaving behind the rich promise of brighter days to come. But soon—too soon, alas!—clouds dimmed the fair horizon, gathering darker and gloomier as time wore on, until fearful storms broke upon her head and left their marks of desolation all along the path she was treading.

The weary, heart-sick wanderer had come back to the old home; but oh! how changed!

Mrs. Angell was really too old and feeble to assume the new duties and take upon herself the new burdens that must come as the consequence of her daughter's return. But, even if she had desired to escape the duty and refuse the burden, there was no alternative. Love inspired her with new strength, and almost, for a time, renewed her youth. Into her heart as well as her home she received the helpless ones.

Had Phœbe been alone, the task would have been a light one for Mrs. Angell. But Phœbe brought with her four badly-trained and badly-governed children, who made a rude invasion of the quiet home of their grandmother and threw all things

into temporary disorder. The mother fretted, scolded, complained, threatened; but her words, it was observed by Mrs. Angell, were scarcely if at all heeded. She had lost the control of her children,—if, indeed, she had ever possessed a right influence over them.

"You'll never be able to get along with them children in the world," said a neighbor to Mrs. Angell. "They'll worry the life and soul out of you!"

"They're healthy, active, and unrestrained," was Mrs. Angell's mild answer; "a little rude and quarrelsome, but not worse at heart than other children. I shall be able to get along with them."

At this moment the two oldest came stamping and screaming into the room, paying not the slightest heed to those present, nor abating in the least degree their noise at the gentle remonstrance of their grandmother.

The neighbor, herself well advanced in years, shook her head, as the noisy couple left finally at their own good pleasure, remarking, as she did so,—

"I pity you, Mrs. Angell! Were such a brood thrown upon my hands, at my time of life, I'd run away from Bloomfield. It's a shame! Phœbe should have made an effort to keep them herself and by herself."

The neighbor spoke warmly.

"Phœbe is too weak," Mrs. Angell replied, in a voice that trembled with feeling, "even to stand alone in the world, far less to bear up with the

weight of these children upon her. The days of her earthly pilgrimage, I fear, are numbered, and the sum small. For one thing I thank my heavenly Father; and it is this:" (the voice of good Mrs. Angell had grown firm again, and light shone in her aged countenance:)—"that I have a home and a heart for her and hers. Many times have I thought that my work was done in this world; and I have sometimes wondered why I was still permitted to live on. But I was only a blind doubter and questioner. He who sees the end from the beginning saw the work still in reserve for me:—a great and important work of training four young immortals for his kingdom. All is clear now, my friend, and the path of duty plain before me. May he give me strength and faith and patience!"

"Amen! For you need them!" the neighbor responded, almost irreverently.

"We need them at all times and under every varying circumstance of our lives," said Mrs. Angell. "I need them now, as I have always needed them; and it is so, and has always been so, with you. We usually feel as much burdened by small duties as by large ones; for as our day is so will our strength be. Under some circumstances the grasshopper is a burden. But the more important duties that require earnestness and self-sacrifice have their larger, and sometimes their exceeding great, rewards."

"You always take a higher view of things than it is possible for me to take," replied the neighbor. "I wish sometimes that I were like you. But we

can t be all alike in this world. As for the burden which you have now taken upon yourself, you will find it heavier than a flock of grasshoppers! Goodness!" The children returned, screeching and stamping through the room again. "Did you ever hear such a din, or see such a graceless, unmannerly set?" remarked the neighbor, on their final egress. "If you succeed in doing any thing with them you will be a worker of wonders."

"There is a door of entrance into every heart, if you can only unlock it," said Mrs. Angell, cheerfully.

"There are some hearts the door of which no human hand has skill to unlock," was replied.

Mrs. Angell shook her head. "I never tried to enter the heart of any one that I did not find the key."

"I should like to see you make the trial with my daughter Mary's oldest boy, Tom. Such a limb I never met with! Mary sent him down here a few weeks ago to spend his vacation; but I packed him off home in three days. I never saw his match! He paid no more heed to me than if I had been some superannuated old negro. If I said 'Tom, *stop* that noise,' or '*Don't* do that, Tom,' he never so much as looked at me, but kept on acting worse, if any thing. Why, he hadn't been in the house three hours before I boxed his ears soundly for some impudence, which I never take from children. If the king's son were to give me impudence, I'd box his ears for him soundly!—I would! Anyhow, I don't

believe in children being pushed off upon their grandmothers, just to get rid of them; and so I wrote to Mary when I sent Tom home. We have had our own trouble with our own children; and now let our children take care of their own young ones. This is the doctrine I preach and practise too. Mary got right-down angry, and wrote me a tart letter. But I took no notice of that. Young blood boils over quickly; but it cools off in good time. There's one thing you'll have to do, Mrs. Angell; and that is, take these children down with a strong hand; if you don't they'll kill you. As for that imaginary door in the heart, I guess you'll never find it. Ruling by love is a very pleasant theory; but that sort of rule, I'm thinking, has ruined more children than any thing else. You have to govern the young reprobates with an iron hand. That's been my way."

"The result," Mrs. Angell could have said, (but that would have been too personal and painful,) "does not speak volumes in favor of your theory." Her thoughts had turned involuntarily to the children of her old friend and neighbor, not one of whom had turned out as a mother's heart could wish. In their early days they were hectored, punished, and driven about in a way that closed up their hearts,—not lovingly guided and their natural evils so repressed that good affections could take root in the soil of their young minds; and, when they grew old enough and strong enough for successful rebellion, they threw off the maternal yoke,

and went out in the world prepared to resist all authority that put trammels on their freedom. No; the result did not speak strongly in favor of the aged friend's theory.

"Well, well," said Mrs. Angell, in a mild voice, "we must all act as we see to be right. Your way was never my way."

"I know that, Mrs. Angell, for we used to have many talks on the subject." The neighbor's voice fell, and became a little mournful in its tone. "And maybe I *was* too hard, sometimes. But I did every thing for the best. Ah me! Children are always a sorrow. I've heard of having joy in children, and all that; but I never yet saw anybody whose experience verified the saying."

Mrs. Angell made no answer, but sat, with her eyes upon the floor, lost in thoughts and memories excited by the remarks of her friend. The latter remained silent also. At last Mrs. Angell said,—

"I often think of that boy—the son of your first husband—who ran away so many years ago. What has become of him?"

"Oh, dear! Mrs. Angell, I never suffer memory to go back that far, if I can help it," sighed the neighbor. "Poor Morgan! There was a great deal of good in him, for all his self-will and disobedience He was a smart boy, too, and I was so proud of him; —if he wasn't my own flesh and blood. But two sharp tempers came together when we met; or, rather, it was flint and steel. I was very young and inexperienced, then, Mrs. Angell, as you know, and

very high-tempered. Poor boy! His father almost broke his heart about him."

"He cannot be living," said Mrs. Angell.

"No. We gave him up for dead many years ago."

"How long has it been, Mrs. Burden, since he went away?"

"Twenty-five years."

"He was thirteen, I believe?"

"Yes, just entering his fourteenth year. But I cannot bear to think of it, Mrs. Angell. I was to blame there, I know. I had too little patience with the boy, and made rather a hard stepmother. His own mother was a gentle, yielding, affectionate creature, as we all know, and spoiled Morgan completely. It is not much to be wondered that he felt coldly toward one who, in assuming her place, attempted the new government of force and required implicit obedience. Such obedience is, I hold, absolutely necessary, and must be gained. But I erred in being too impatient. I did not take time for the will to become pliant before requiring it to bend. Poor Morgan! The thought of him has made many a night sleepless. None of my children have done very well, but his case has ever grieved me most of all. Poor boy! There was in him the promise of a brilliant manhood. What would I not give to know his fate! But I must not talk of this. It makes me too sad; and regrets at my time of life are fruitless. How is Phœbe to-day?"

"Not so well. She has night-sweats, and grows weaker under them."

"Poor child! That is bad," said Mrs. Burden, rising. "Well, good-day," she added. "I hope all will come out right; but you have undertaken a great deal at your time of life."

And the neighbor went home, musing by the way, and wondering how Mrs. Angell would ever bear up under the new duties she had taken upon herself.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE GRANDMOTHER—A SURPRISE.

STEADILY searched Mrs. Angell for the door in the hearts of her grandchildren; and she found it, as she knew that she would,—found it in each heart, opened the door, and went in.

Very great was the wonder of Mrs. Burden at the steady change that went on in these children,—progressively visible each time she dropped in, as was her frequent custom, to sit and talk with her old friend and neighbor.

"It really beats me out," she said, "to see what an alteration there is in that great, rough boy. He was like a bear. How in the world have you managed to tame him?"

"Not by force, Mrs. Burden," returned Mrs.

Angell. "Not by force, you may be sure; for, if I had the will to rule by a strong arm, the strength is wanting. My frame is weak, my step totters, my hand is feeble. I am in the sere and yellow leaf. Oh, no, my friend; the power over them was gained in another way. I sought for the door in their hearts, and found it."

"It is wonderful! I can say no more." The face of Mrs. Burden expressed astonishment.

"John," the grandmother spoke, in a very gentle voice, leaning from the window near which she was sitting, "tell William that he is hammering 'most too loud: the noise will disturb his mother."

"He'll stop, of course!" Mrs. Burden spoke doubtingly.

But scarcely had the words passed her lips ere the noise ceased.

"Grandmother," said a voice at the window, in a cheerful tone, "I'm mending my wagon-wheel, and have only one more nail to drive."

"Oh, very well," replied Mrs. Angell; "you can drive that one."

"If you think it disturbs mother I can go round by the barn," said William.

"Perhaps you had better do so, Willy: your mother is sleeping."

The bright face of the lad disappeared from the window, and in a few moments the sound of his hammer was heard faintly in the distance.

"Well, that does beat all!" exclaimed Mrs. Burden. "I've read of such things in books, but never

saw the like before with my natural eyes. How have you managed? What is your secret?"

"I have not subdued them by force, as already said; and there are but two ways to manage children," replied Mrs. Angell. "Contention and the strong hand *may* answer in some cases,—though I have my doubts; but love is always powerful. Make a child understand that you are his friend and feel an interest in all that concerns him, and your influence is at once established. Love creates love. The saying is so trite that we forget its value."

"It isn't so easy to do all that," said Mrs. Burden.

"Do what?"

"Take an interest in every thing that interests children. I never could do it, even in my younger days, and I'm sure I couldn't do it now."

"If we from the heart desire their good," was answered, "we will in all possible ways adapt ourselves to their condition. Singularly enough, all the sacrifice, adaptation, and conformity to circumstance is by some people required of children. They must bend to every thing around them, while nothing bends to them. They must be proper and orderly self-denying and patient; must not be angry no rude, self-willed nor exacting. And yet the very parents who visit these evils in their children with indignant rebuke or swift punishment never think it necessary to overcome like evils in themselves! At best, they go little beyond adroit concealment; and even this veil is too rarely assumed at home. If a mother, in sudden anger, speak sharply to her

child and use unseemly words, can we wonder that the child imitates her when in strife with his brother or sister? If she strike in a fit of passion, will not the child, acting from its inherent impulses and instructed by such high example, strike also? As the mother or nurse or attendant is, so, Mrs. Burden, will the children be. There must be self-conquest before there can be order in the household. We must be truly loving before the spirit of love can pervade our homes. Order, peace, good-will, gentleness, and a preference of one over the other, never have their origin among the children, rising from them upward, but have birth in the hearts of the parents, and are seen first in their lives. It is from them that the sphere of love goes forth, filling the whole atmosphere and making it radiant with heavenly light and musical with the songs of angels."

The head of Mrs. Burden bent lower and lower as Mrs. Angell talked, for she was rebuked by her words. Both sat silent for some moments. In the pause the sound of wheels was heard, and Mrs. Angell, glancing from the window, said, in a tone of indifference,—

"The stage. It always passes about this time."

"See; the driver is reining up his horses." Mrs. Burden leaned over toward the window as she spoke.

"So he is. I wonder who is going to stop here? No one that I can think of."

"There's a lady getting out," said Mrs. Burden. "Can you see her face?"

"Yes, but she is a stranger to me. There's some

mistake, probably. I must go out and see what it means."

By the time Mrs. Angell arrived at the garden gate, that opened on the road, two trunks had been deposited on the ground and the stranger stood beside them. Her veil was closely drawn.

"Mrs. Angell?" she said, in a tone of inquiry.

"That is my name, madam," replied the old lady

Mrs. Burden had come out to the road-side, her curiosity strongly excited. Her presence seemed unwelcome to the stranger, who drew the folds of her veil closer and turned her face partly aside from the sharp scrutiny of her small, piercing gray eyes.

There was a momentary embarrassment on all sides; but this was relieved by Mrs. Angell, who, in a voice the kindness of which penetrated the stranger's heart, invited her to walk in, at the same time giving directions to a working-man, who had come out on hearing the stage stop, to carry the two trunks into the house.

The curiosity of Mrs. Burden was intensely excited; but she saw that it was not right for her to remain under the circumstances, and so went home.

The stranger, as soon as she was alone with Mrs. Angell, drew aside her veil and showed her the pale, thin face of a woman not far in years beyond life's middle altitude. There was something familiar in the face; and yet Mrs. Angell could not recognise it as the face of one she had ever known. How intently were the dark eyes of the stranger fixed upon

her countenance! How eagerly was every line, as an index to her heart, read over!

"Aunt Margaret!" she at last ejaculated, a gush of feeling in her voice. How the words and tones thrilled the heart of Mrs. Angell!

"Aunt Margaret!" repeated the stranger, bending closer. "Oh, Aunt Margaret!"

Feeling could be controlled no longer. Tears leaped from the stranger's eyes, and, bending forward, she laid her weeping face against the good old lady's bosom.

"Who are you?" Emotion had spent itself, and the stranger, calm in exterior, had laid off her travelling-attire, and sat looking into the face of Mrs. Angell, from which her eyes turned scarcely a moment. The question was soberly asked, and in a voice that said, "I must have a true answer."

"Aunt Margaret!" was the stranger's only yet tenderly-uttered response.

"Is your name Harriet?" Mrs. Angell inquired, a sudden light breaking in upon her mind.

"My name is Harriet," was answered.

"My brother had a child named Harriet," said the old lady.

"I am Harriet," replied the stranger, with forced calmness; "the daughter of your brother James."

"Dear heart!" ejaculated Mrs. Angell, her eyes filling with tears. "And can this indeed be my brother's child?"

She was bewildered for a time. Then she had many questions to ask. But to all questions touch-

ing herself the stranger maintained the most entire reserve.

"You had a sister, I believe?" said Mrs. Angell.

"Yes." The inquiry seemed to give her pain.

"Is she living?"

"No," was the brief answer.

Mrs. Angell waited for her niece to communicate something about one so near to her as an only sister. But not a word of information was volunteered; and she did not feel at liberty, under the circumstances, to intrude upon her any questions.

"By what other name than Harriet shall I call you?" asked Mrs. Angell.

"I have no other name here, Aunt Margaret," was answered, mournfully.

"No other name to me?" Mrs. Angell spoke as if she felt that such reserve toward her could not and would not be maintained.

"No other name, even to you, Aunt Margaret," replied the stranger,—or niece, as we must now designate her. "I have come to you out of the world where I am known, and it is my desire to forget, if that were possible, the whole of my identity with that world. But—Heaven help me!—oblivion is impossible!"

For a short time the unhappy woman was strongly agitated, but in a little while recovered herself.

"Aunt Margaret," she resumed, speaking very earnestly, yet in a sad voice, "you see one before you who, both sinning and sinned against,—yet most sinned against,—has been driven from the old

paths of life and now seeks a hiding-place. I have come to you because—why I cannot tell—my heart yearned toward you, and I felt that with you I should find an arm to lean upon in my weakness. If you say to me, 'Pass on; there is no home for you here,' I will take up my burden and go farther. But oh, Aunt Margaret, do not say this;—at least, not now; for in the whole wide world there is not a door but this where I have the shadow of a claim to admission. For my father's sake, do not send me forth again!"

"Dear child!" said Aunt Margaret, drawing an arm around the neck of her weeping relative, "you have nothing to fear on that score. I shall not say, 'Pass on!'"

"The Friend of the friendless bless you!" was murmured. When a little calmer, the niece resumed:—

"I shall be a burden to you, but will make the burden as light as possible. I have come out of the world in haste, fleeing from evils too great to be endured, and have come out portionless. But I have hands and a willing heart, and both shall work for you. Only let me hide myself here!"

"I have not much to share with you, Harriet," said Mrs. Angell; "but to a portion of what I have, as far as it goes, you are welcome. It may not be, however, that in my humble way of life you will find what custom and a different mode of living have rendered necessary to your comfort."

"There is too great anguish here," replied the

niece, laying her hand against her bosom, "to leave much concern for what is on the outside. But I fear that I shall be but a burden to you at best. Whose children are these?" she added, making the inquiry abruptly, as the grandchildren of Mrs. Angell went shouting and laughing past the window.

"My daughter Phœbe's." Mrs. Angell sighed as she spoke.

"Are you fond of children?" she inquired, a moment after, speaking with some earnestness.

"Not very," was half-indifferently answered.

Mrs. Angell sighed again, and let her eyes fall upon the floor, while her countenance assumed a sober aspect. A sigh from the lips of her niece, so deep that it almost startled Mrs. Angell, caused her to look up. The face of Harriet was almost distorted by some sharp mental suffering.

"Have you children? And are they living?"

If she had paused a moment for reflection Mrs. Angell would not have put this abrupt query; more particularly as her niece had positively averred that she would give no information touching the past in her history. The question seemed to pierce with the pain of a sharp sword. Harriet sprung to her feet, uttering a quick exclamation. Turning a pale face upon her aunt, she said,—

"Was it not enough, Aunt Margaret, that I said to you, 'I wish to forget the past'? Do not spur me into madness! I am not strong enough to bear up much longer under the crushing weight that is

on me. O Lord, help me!" And she flung her hands wildly above her head. A voice so full of despair as that in which the last sentence was uttered Mrs. Angell had never heard.

"May I be alone for a little while, Aunt Margaret?"

The strong agitation was suddenly repressed, and Harriet stood before her aunt, calm, but very pale.

"Come;" (Mrs. Angell's voice was low and tender;) "come, my poor child!"

And she led her to a small, neat chamber, above, the bed and windows of which were draped in purest white.

"The world cannot find you here, Harriet," said she, as she turned partly away to leave her alone; "but God is everywhere, a present help in times of trouble."

"Lord, help *me!*" Heart and lips uttered the words fervently as the door closed, and the miserable woman sunk upon her knees by the bedside.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DRIVEN TO THE WALL.

Mr. Eldridge did not see his wife again after meeting her in the street as mentioned. Absence softened his feelings toward her but very little. Her request for clothing and some money granted,

that final act of separation was to him the closing scene in the unhappy drama of their married life. Incidentally he learned, some weeks later, that she had left Arden; but where she had gone was not tated, and he asked no questions. His own steps, from the hour of this unfortunate event, were in a downward path. Judge Gray soon drew him entirely within his influence, and this influence was for evil, not good.

Under the wise, unselfish care of Mrs. Lamb another spirit began to pervade the household of Mr. Eldridge; and his children, from being quarrelsome and ungovernable, soon manifested opposite tempers, and showed themselves orderly and quiet at all times when their father was at home. But it needed a different and stronger attraction than simply quiet children to hold back Mr. Eldridge from the allurements that now invited him abroad on each successive evening. He had a home, but no heart-companion,—no one to watch and wait for him when absent or to welcome his return. He came in and went out at will, with a feeling that no one thought of him while away or felt happier at his coming. No; this is speaking too strongly. We had almost forgotten Katy, the little injured one, and the new love that had sprung up between her and her father. Steadily burned this flame. How the child's face would brighten at the sound of her father's voice or the echo of his returning footsteps! His night and morning kiss was a joy to her. Toward the child his feelings were of

the tenderest character; and often he sat by the bed on which she lay, holding her little hand, when, but for the bond between them, he would have been away from his home. But not strong enough was this bond to hold him back from temptation. There was needed a stronger power than this.

Time moved on, and Katy gradually recovered from the serious injury she had sustained, and was able first to sit up a little, then to move through the room, and finally to go over the house with little or no assistance. But she was sadly deformed and dwarfed, and the natural beauty of her countenance was gone forever. Daily the childish features grew more and more pinched. The blossoms returned not to her wan cheeks, nor the ruby to her lips. It made the heart ache to look at her. No one could have recognised in the quiet little hunchbacked girl sitting, with a pensive face, in the door of her father's dwelling, the wild, dancing, noisy, passionate romp who made all things alive around her a few months before.

Everybody felt kindly and acted kindly toward little Katy. Even her brothers, with whom she had lived in contention almost from her birth, no longer felt any antagonism toward her, but emulated each other in friendly offices. They amused her with their playthings, read to her little stories out of books, and shared with her the dainties they happened to receive.

The kind Mrs. Lamb still remained in the family of Mr. Eldridge; and it was mainly her influence—

aided, of course, by the change in little Katy—that worked such a revolution. She was mild, gentle, sympathizing, but firm; and the children found themselves far happier in obeying her rules than in following the impulses of a natural wilfulness.

Scarcely a year had passed since the fatal quarrel with his wife, before it was apparent to every one in Arden that Mr. Eldridge was moving with rapid feet in the path that leads to ruin. Not a single evening was spent at home; and it rarely happened that he came in until past the hour of midnight. He was as much changed in appearance as in life; for the dissolute course he was leading left its disfiguring marks on his countenance. Gradually his best practice began to leave him; for, through want of attention or from a confused intellect, the consequence of his habits, he lost two or three important cases where justice and law were both on his side. But there were causes at work of more rapid execution than even a dissolute life, destined in a very little while to bear him down and sweep from his possession every vestige of property he had acquired by years of industry and prudence.

Craig had fastened himself upon him like a vampire, and with no intention of letting go his hold while there was a dollar left to win. He had studied his victim with a carefulness that gave him full knowledge of all his weak points of character, and now he was almost entirely within his power. Step by step, step by step, he led him downward, and dollar by dollar he exhausted his substance, and yet

so managed it that Eldridge always sought him, and, in most cases, proposed the trial of skill. Judge Gray maintained a more dignified attitude toward the infatuated man, and, when he met him at the card-table, generally contrived to be the loser, though never for sums of any importance. Thus he managed to keep the suspicions of Eldridge quiet as to any complicity he might have in his ruin. He always stood his friend if he wanted money, but never accommodated him without security and a consideration; so that, in time, Judge Gray had his hand upon all the property the lawyer possessed, and could wrench it from him at any moment he felt inclined to do so. And the inclination was not wanting. In his own good time Judge Gray would act, and that without mercy.

The land scheme had fallen through, apparently in consequence of the owner of the mill property not caring to sell, but really because Judge Gray had never intended that the action of the company should proceed as far as the proposed purchase. The railroad scheme must, he knew, be defeated, at the next session of the Legislature,—as it was; the whole affair having been projected by certain political gamblers to serve personal ends, and not having in it any value whatever as a measure of public interest. Other tempting speculations were proposed and plans for working them out digested; but it always happened that between the inception of the scheme and its execution unexpected circumstances interposed which took the shape of insurmountable

difficulties. Somehow it always happened that the judge was the only party in the case who reaped any advantage; and the real advantage gained by him was by no means always apparent. He was too "long-headed" for even the sharpest men of Arden, and bent most of those to his will who came into intimate association with him.

"Let me have two hundred dollars, judge," said Eldridge, entering hurriedly the office of Judge Gray, a little over a year from the time his rapid descent began.

The judge shrugged his shoulders, and replied,—

"Haven't got fifty to bless myself with."

"I must have it, judge!" Eldridge grew excited.

"Can't get it here: that's certain." The judge appeared unusually serious. "The fact is, you've drained me out."

"Me?" Eldridge looked surprised.

"Yes; you! Haven't I met nearly all your demands for money, reasonable or unreasonable? But there is a point where even friendship becomes powerless to serve."

"You are fully secured." Eldridge spoke with some warmth and a little indignation.

"I'm not so sure of that," said Judge Gray. "But there is one thing very certain, Mr. Eldridge: I must realize on some of these securities unless you can take them up."

"You must?" Eldridge had been drinking rather more freely than usual, and was not therefore in a state to meet this unexpected aspect of affairs.

Something of defiance was now added to his indignation.

"I have said so, Mr Eldridge, and my words rarely have a double meaning. I have considerable sums of money to raise, and must raise them on my securities; for all my available means are loaned out on securities." Judge Gray spoke firmly, like a man who felt altogether in earnest; and, confused as the mind of Eldridge was, he received this distinct impression. To a certain extent he was sobered, and became altogether so when Judge Gray added,—

"There is no occasion for excitement, Mr. Eldridge, about this matter: none in the least. It is a plain business affair. You borrowed my money, did you not?"

"Yes."

"And, among other securities, you gave me a mortgage on your house?"

"I did."

"Why did you give this mortgage?"

"To make you safe."

"Precisely. But was there nothing intended beyond the mere making safe?"

"What more was intended?" asked Eldridge.

"Clearly, that in case you could not return my money when I needed it the means of realization would be in my hands. Was not this so?"

"Oh, certainly." The admission was not made heartily.

"Very well. The time has come when I am

compelled to realize; and now I ask you what is to be done."

Eldridge offered no reply, but sat like a man stupefied, with his eyes upon the floor.

"I am of course inclined to make every thing as easy for you as possible, unless you throw obstacles in my way."

"Why should I do that, judge?" Eldridge seemed hurt by the intimation.

"There is no good reason why you should do so, for the case is a very clear one. At what do you value your house?"

"It is worth every dollar of five thousand."

Judge Gray shook his head.

"It would not bring my mortgage under the hammer."

"Four thousand dollars?"

"No."

"That would depend on circumstances. I've been offered four thousand five hundred over and over again."

"By whom?"

"By two or three parties."

"Let me advise you to sell, then," said the judge. "I wouldn't give a dollar over four thousand if I was in the market as a purchaser."

"I don't care about selling even at five thousand," replied Eldridge. "In a few years it will be worth six or seven, if property continues to rise in value at the present ratio of advance."

"You overestimate its worth altogether," said

Judge Gray. "But that is neither here nor there. A thing is worth what it will sell for, and not a farthing more, as you and I well know and have demonstrated a hundred times in our lives. All value beyond that is merely an ideal one and a fiction, so far as practical purposes are concerned."

"What do you propose doing?" inquired Eldridge, after a few moments of hurried thinking. His thoughts were not very clear.

"The best I can under the circumstances."

"You will not enter up that mortgage?"

"I *must* do it, unless you can raise me the four thousand dollars it represents."

"But that is impossible, judge!"

"I'm sorry."

"Judge Gray, I did not expect this of you!"

"Necessity knows no law, my friend. But why this excitement? One so familiar with legal matters and their practical operation as you should hardly be surprised at the entering up of an unsatisfied mortgage. It is but the ordinary course of things,—an every-day transaction. The real aspect of the case is not altered because the result happens to bear hard upon you. Such things always bear hard upon somebody.

Eldridge was struck down into silence.

"What more have you to say?" The judge spoke with almost icy coldness.

"Nothing," was the simple answer.

"Will you endeavor to raise the money and pay off the mortgage?"

"No. The effort would be fruitless."

"I'm sorry. But my case admits of neither temporizing nor hesitation. I must sell if you cannot satisfy the mortgage."

"You have other mortgages and securities besides this one, Judge Gray," said Eldridge, arousing himself. "Why then seek to ruin me, when all you wish for may be gained at some other point?"

"Ruin you!" The eyes of Judge Gray flashed, and his tone was indignant. "What do you mean by the insinuation?"

"I can see nothing less in your threatened course of action than a purpose to ruin me," said Eldridge. "Why is this mine sprung upon me so suddenly and when there is no way of escape?"

"Take care, sir, what you say! If you make the slightest impeachment of my honor you'll repent it but once." The face of Judge Gray, usually so imperturbable, was now flushed with anger.

"I don't see that you can hurt me in any thing beyond what is already purposed," said Eldridge, coldly. "And, as to impeaching your honor, no one can do that but yourself. To call a man dishonorable does not make him so. It is the dishonorable purpose that gives quality to his life."

The judge waved his hand impatiently, and, with a look of disgust on his features,—

"Don't read me any of your stale homilies," he said, sneering as he spoke. "When I wish to hear a sermon I'll go to church."

"Then do your worst!" ejaculated Eldridge,

stung by the manner and tone of the judge even more than by his words. "I have been a blind fool! But my eyes are opened at last. Perhaps I am not as powerless in your hands as you may think. We shall see. When a man is driven to the wall he sometimes fights with a desperation that surprises his antagonist. I shall not yield without a struggle, depend on't. You can make up your mind to that."

"See here, Eldridge!" There was a fierce purpose in the aspect of the judge that subdued in a measure his companion's excitement. "I warn you not to go any further in this direction; for if you make me your enemy I'll pursue you to the death! My hate is as strong as my friendship."

"In that case your enemies have little to fear," was Eldridge's contemptuous answer. "But it is useless to bandy words with you. Good-day, sir!"

Eldridge turned off abruptly, and left the office of Judge Gray, who fairly gnashed his teeth after him.

"There's no atonement for that!" said he, fiercely. "Driven to the wall, and at bay? Pah! I can crush him at a single blow; and—I'll do it!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE CRISIS.

JUDGE GRAY did not find it such easy work as he supposed it would be to execute his purpose toward Eldridge. The lawyer understood thoroughly his craft, and knew all the quirks and shifts required to foil, at least for a time, his antagonist. The entering up of a mortgage is usually a very straightforward and somewhat brief process. It did not prove so in the present instance. Certain informalities were alleged, which caused a stay of proceedings, leading to other perplexing delays, all of which chafed the judge terribly, and filled his heart with a more bitter enmity toward the man in whose ruin he had been a secret accomplice.

But Eldridge was, for all his struggles, hopelessly in the power of Judge Gray, and his utter prostration was only a question of time. Before a twelvemonth passed, every vestige of property was swept from his hands, and he went forth from the home in which his children were born and sought a shelter for them in hired lodgings. At this point Mrs. Lamb separated from him. She had become strongly attached to Katy, whose almost helpless condition drew largely upon her womanly sympathies; and, at her request, the little girl was taken from her father

and brothers and removed to the home of this second mother.

Left pretty much to their own wills in a boarding-house, the two sons of Mr. Eldridge relapsed into their old disorderly states, and not many months went by before they had made themselves so disagreeable to all the family that their father was desired to remove them. Incensed at this, he determined to "put them out" to work, as the best thing that could be done; thus ridding himself of the trouble of their presence and the burden of their support. And so deadened by this time had become his natural affections, that no struggle with his feelings was required in gaining consent to the measure of sending out to hard service two little boys of the ages of ten and twelve years.

No great difficulty was found in obtaining places for William and Jacob with farmers in the neighborhood of Arden; and the little boys were separated and sent forth into the world alone, while the father, drowning daily in strong drink the smarting consciousness of degradation that gave bitterness to every sober moment of his life, moved steadily forward on his downward way.

Only one attraction for the heart of Morgan Eldridge remained; only one thought softened his feelings; only one image lightened up with its presence the gloomy chambers of his spirit. The thought and image were of little Katy, toward whom the tide of love had flowed on with a steady current from the hour it first set in that direction. At the

close of every day he went to the house of Mrs. Lamb to see his child, whose pale face always grew warm with love at his coming. The only thing that troubled him with regard to the disposition made of Jacob and William was Katy's grief about her brothers. As best he could did he soothe her feelings, even deceiving her in regard to their real positions, and picturing them to her as leading pleasant lives in the country, when they were at hard service and neglected, even if not treated with positive cruelty. But he found the task of reconciling her to the change a hard one; and she continued to grieve for her brothers, and never saw her father without making some reference to or inquiry about them.

Step by step did Mr. Eldridge move on in the downward way. Habit steadily acquired strength and almost daily brought into subjection some yet struggling but feeble remnant of moral power. One friend after another receded from him, and his cases gradually diminished in number and importance, until, from having the best practice in Arden, he came to be regarded as the most undesirable lawyer in the whole county.

Rapidly, very rapidly, did Mr. Eldridge fall to a certain point. There he revolved for years in a circle of degradation, that closed toward the centre in spirals so small that the approach to final ruin of body and soul was hardly perceptible. Occasionally he appeared in the court-house, to argue some unimportant case intrusted to his care by some poor or

half-indifferent client. The result very often depended on his state of inebriation: if his intellect was not too much obscured, and there was good material in his case, he generally gained the decision.

The income of Mr. Eldridge was, as may be supposed, small under these circumstances. Most of it was spent for the poison that burns up the life-blood of its victims. But, out of himself, degraded as he was and enslaved to appetite, there was one object for which he felt solicitude and for which he was always ready to make some small sacrifice. That object was his deformed child. No day passed without his seeing Katy, if it was only for a few minutes at a time; and almost always he brought her something as a token of his love. It was a touching sight to see them together; and the more so as Katy grew older and her mind came into a more distinct perception of her father's true condition.

At ten years of age—nearly four years since the accident to Katy—the little girl had become almost a woman in her thoughtful care over her father, who still came daily to see her, but now, most of his time, with all his senses obscured. One afternoon Katy was sitting in the door, watching, as was her custom, for her father, when she saw him a short distance away, moving along with steps unsteadier than usual. As he came nearer, she could see a great red spot that covered half of his face.

"Oh, Mrs. Lamb," she cried, running back into

the house, "do come here and see what is the matter with father!"

The child's white face and quivering voice startled the good lady, and, dropping her work, Mrs. Lamb came hurriedly to the front door.

"Bless us!" she exclaimed, the moment her eyes rested on the form of the poor inebriate; "it's blood! What can have happened to him?"

At the word "blood" little Katy grew faint and staggered backward, sinking upon the door-step. All her bodily strength failed in an instant.

"He's fallen and hurt himself, I suppose." Mrs. Lamb uttered her thoughts aloud. "Dear! dear! he's getting so that he's not fit to go about alone! He'll be killed outright some of these times, I'm afraid."

The truth of her father's really helpless condition flashed upon Katy, and a strong, womanly purpose was instantly formed in her mind, giving her heart a new impulse, and sending the almost-curdling blood forth again to the farthest extremities of her body. Strength came back to her limbs; and, rising up quickly, she ran forward to meet her father, down whose face the blood was flowing from a frightful gash on the side of his forehead. Katy seized his hand, and, holding it firmly, steadied his steps, and led him forward toward the house, the great tears rolling down her pale face and dropping upon the ground.

"How did this happen, Mr. Eldridge?" said Mrs.

Lamb, when the father and child reached the door where she stood.

But the mind of Eldridge was in too great obscurity to comprehend fully the question, much less to give an intelligible answer. Mrs. Lamb took him into her house and washed the blood from his face; but it continued to flow from the large wound in his forehead, which penetrated to the bone.

"Run over for Dr. Penrose," said Mrs. Lamb to Katy, seeing that she could not check the flow of blood; and the child started off, with a new fear in her heart.

A few minutes before, as Dr. Penrose came past the tavern known as McQuillan's, he noticed a small group of persons just in front of the house, who were talking in an excited manner.

"It's a shame!" one of them said, speaking in a very indignant tone of voice.

"Let him bridle his foul tongue, then," retorted, angrily, another individual, in whom the doctor recognised Mr. Craig; "if he don't I'll be the death of him!"

The doctor crossed over to ascertain the cause of disturbance.

"He was drunk, and you shouldn't have weighed his words as accurately as the words of sober men."

"Drunk or sober, no man shall use the language he did, and escape punishment,—miserable, drunken vagabond!"

"He was just as severe on Judge Gray," was remarked.

"Judge Gray is competent to take care of his own reputation in his own way, and so am I. My way has in it, perhaps, less of tardiness or circumlocution.'

"You've injured him badly, I'm afraid. There was a terrible gash on the poor man's face where it struck the horseblock."

"It will teach him better manners in future," retorted Craig, fiercely.

"Of whom are they speaking?" asked Dr. Penrose, addressing one of the company.

"Of that poor, drunken creature, Eldridge. He's got some grudge against Craig, and abuses him right and left if he happens to meet him when in liquor. He went at him, as usual, just now, and Craig, losing all patience, pitched him off the porch and hurt him rather badly. It was a cruel thing!"

"Where is he?" inquired the doctor.

"He went staggering up the street as soon as he was lifted from the ground, his face covered with dust and blood."

"How long since this happened?"

"Only a few minutes ago. He is hardly out of sight."

Dr. Penrose waited to hear no more, but walked off rapidly, in the hope of overtaking the injured man, in whom, debased as he was, he had never lost his interest. He had gone nearly as far as the residence of Mrs. Lamb, when he met Katy hurrying along as fast as her little feet would carry her.

"Oh, doctor!" she exclaimed, seizing hold of his hand, "do come, quick, to father!"

"Where is he?" asked Dr. Penrose.

"He's at our house," replied the child. "Oh, do come! His face is all bloody!"

Tears almost rained over the face of the child.

"Don't be frightened, dear," said the doctor; "I'll soon make him well again." He spoke in a cheerful, encouraging voice, and led the tearful Katy back to the house of Mrs. Lamb.

A few stitches brought the edges of the cut together, and a few strips of adhesive plaster covered the wound and retained the skin in its place. The blood ceased to flow, and all the more alarming features of the case were removed.

"I think he had better remain here to-night," said the kind-hearted Mrs. Lamb.

"Perhaps it would be as well. The fall and wound have shocked his system more, perhaps, than can now be determined. He hasn't much strength remaining at best, poor man!"

This determined upon, the doctor assisted Mr. Eldridge up-stairs to one of the chambers, and, after seeing him in bed for the night, went away.

After the doctor left, Katy took her place beside the bed on which her father lay, and did not leave her position until long after the usual hour of retiring. In the morning she was up and dressed and in his room by daylight. She found him awake and in considerable bewilderment of mind.

"Why, Katy, child, is that you? Where am I? What has happened?" he said, in an earnest way, rising up and looking curiously about the room.

"Oh, father, you've been hurt," said Katy. "You came here yesterday afternoon with your face all cut and bloody, and frightened us, oh, so dreadfully! The doctor came and sewed up the place, just there on your forehead, and said we had better keep you here all night. Now, don't get up, father! It's only just morning, and the sun hasn't risen yet."

"But I must! I must! I can't stay here, child!" answered Mr. Eldridge, in a nervous way, as he made a movement to leave the bed.

In spite of all that Katy could do, her father would get up and dress himself. She had never seen him with all his nervous system unstrung as it then was; and his trembling—almost palsied—hands and uncertain groping movements frightened her. Running to Mrs. Lamb, who was already up and making some preparations for breakfast, she exclaimed,—

"Oh, dear! I wish you'd come to father! I don't know what's the matter with him! He will get up and dress himself, and he's shaking all over. Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" And the child wrung her hands.

Mrs. Lamb went, as Katy desired. She understood much better what ailed the poor man. The artificial stimulant which had supplied so large a portion of nervous activity had become exhausted, and, until this was restored, the tension of his muscles was gone.

"Mr. Eldridge," said Mrs. Lamb, firmly, taking hold of him as she spoke, "you must lie down again. You were hurt badly last night, and it has weakened

ou. I'll make you a strong cup of coffee right away. You'll feel better after drinking it."

The decided way in which this was spoken had its influence. Eldridge suffered himself to be drawn toward the bed, on which he lay down again.

"I'll send the coffee up by Katy in a few minutes," said Mrs. Lamb, as she left the room. "Now, don't attempt to rise until you get it." Then, speaking to Katy, "I'll call you when it's ready."

The promise of a strong cup of coffee was sufficient to make Eldridge remain where he was. Some kind of stimulant he must have, for the condition in which he found himself was intolerable.

When the coffee was at length brought by Katy, his hand proved too unsteady to bear the cup to his eager lips. Two or three attempts only resulted in spilling a portion of the hot fluid upon his clothes and the bed.

"Do, child, hold it for me!" he said, a little impatiently.

Katy took the cup from his hand and held it to his lips. The contents were swallowed at a single draught.

"Oh, dear! isn't this dreadful?" Eldridge spoke to himself in a kind of despairing voice as he fell back upon the bed.

"What is dreadful, father?" asked Katy. The words had startled vague thoughts in her mind, that brought new perceptions touching her father's real condition.

"What is dreadful?" Eldridge repeated the

words in a kind of surprised way, raising himself on his elbow, and looking, with a singular expression of countenance, into the face of Katy. "What is dreadful? Do you see that?" And he held up his hand, that shook like the quivering aspen.

"Isn't that dreadful?" said he, almost passionately.

"Oh, father!" It was all that Katy could utter, for his manner bewildered as well as frightened her.

"Isn't that dreadful, child?" he went on, in a wild way. "Look at my hand! See how it trembles! It is so every morning, Katy. Coffee won't steady it, child. I must have something more than that."

And he sat up on the side of the bed.

"Get me my hat and coat, dear. I must have medicine for this." The voice of Mr. Eldridge had assumed a resolute tone.

"I'll go for Dr. Penrose. He'll give you medicine," said Katy, starting toward the door; and, without waiting for her father's reply or stopping to consult Mrs. Lamb, she ran down-stairs, out of the house, and toward the doctor's office, which was not far distant. The doctor happened to be standing in his door when the child came in sight. Without waiting for her to reach him, he started forward, and, on meeting her, said,—

"What's the matter now, Katy? How is your father?"

"Oh, doctor! do come, won't you? He's shaking

all over so dreadfully, and says he must go out and get medicine!"

The doctor took the child's hand, without replying in any way to the communication, and hurried on toward the house of Mrs. Lamb. Just inside of the door he found the wretched man, partly dressed, and contending with Mrs. Lamb, who had hold of him. He was resolutely bent on going out. At sight of the doctor he gave up all resistance.

"Come, Mr. Eldridge," said Dr. Penrose, firmly, as he took hold of his arm, "you must go back to your room. You are sick, and cannot go out to-day."

Eldridge yielded, and went back half of the length of the passage toward the stairway. But he suddenly stopped, and, stretching out his arm, said, in a wild, eager manner,—

"Do you see that, doctor?"

The arm shook with a nervous tremor.

"Yes, indeed; I do see it," replied the doctor, speaking with the concern he felt.

"And you know what it means as well as I do, doctor, and what I must have," said Eldridge. "I'm in a bad way."

"The first thing is to get back into your bed," was the doctor's reply to this.

"I must have brandy, doctor! Nothing else will do. Will you give me some brandy?"

"Yes; a small portion,—just enough to steady your nerves," replied Dr. Penrose.

Eldridge made no further resistance, but suffered

himself to be taken up-stairs and to bed. A very small portion of brandy, and that considerably diluted, was given at brief intervals. This treatment was in part to satisfy the patient. The chief remedy in the case was morphine, and that was administered in gradually-increasing quantities for many hours, before the terrible waking dreams that soon began to infest the imagination of the wretched man were lost in the deep sleep of unconsciousness.

We will not linger in our narrative, nor harrow the reader's mind by any minute picturing of the fearful scenes of that day,—fearful to the agonized child and to the gentle-hearted woman who bore to her a truer love than had ever stirred in the heart of her own mother. When they were over, Katy had advanced on her life-journey over the space of years. New thoughts had taken possession of her brain and new purposes matured in her heart into resolute determinations. What these were will be seen.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE PROTECTING ANGEL.

THE dangerous crisis over, Mr. Eldridge slowly renewed his strength. It was nearly three weeks after the terrible disease from which he had suffered began, ere he was so far recovered as to be able to leave his room. Out of this sickness he came with

a multitude of good purposes forming in his mind. Mrs. Lamb, whose unremitting attentions gave her a monitor's privilege, talked with him often and earnestly about his condition, and urged him by every high and holy consideration to abandon at once and forever the vice which had almost com passed the ruin of his soul as well as body.

Eldridge promised to enter upon an entirely new course of life,—to shun public houses, and to refuse, on all occasions, the cup which for him to drink was madness. He still had his law-office; and there he resolved to go, daily, giving strict attention to any business that might offer, and thus making one more effort to be a man and regain, as he yet had the legal ability to do, his lost position.

There were many doubts and misgivings in the heart of Mrs. Lamb when the day came on which Mr. Eldridge considered himself well enough to go forth again and meet the strong temptations that would inevitably beset his way; and well might she tremble for the result. But little conversation passed at the breakfast-table; for the thoughts of all were too busy for words. Katy left the table first, and went from the room with the manner of one who had some earnest purpose in her mind. Not long afterward, as Mrs. Lamb was going up-stairs, she met Katy coming down with her bonnet on.

"Where are you going, child?" she inquired, with natural surprise.

Katy lifted her clear, dark eyes, and fixed them steadily on the face of Mrs. Lamb, who saw in them

an expression never read there before. For a few moments she was silent, and then answered, in a low but very firm voice,—

"I'm going with father."

"Where?"

"Anywhere that he goes," was replied softly, sadly, but very firmly. The eyes of Katy did not sink beneath the fixed gaze of Mrs. Lamb.

"Why, child! child!" returned Mrs. Lamb, in a perplexed voice, "this will never do! You cannot go with your father."

"Nobody loves him but me," answered Katy, whose eyes still read the face of Mrs. Lamb, and with a vision that penetrated even to her thoughts.

"No, no, Katy; this will never do!" And Mrs. Lamb shook her head.

"You told Dr. Penrose," said Katy, with a firmness of tone and force of language that were a new surprise to Mrs. Lamb, "that you had no hope of father, because there was nobody to see after or care for him; and that bad men would tempt him to his own destruction. Didn't you say this?"

"Yes, dear, I did say it," was the constrained admission.

"Somebody must see after him," said the child.

"But you can't do it, Katy. You are only a little girl."

"He's my father," was the touching answer,—"my own dear father,—and I love him. He won't send me back home, I know. He'll like to have me go with him everywhere; I'm sure he will, for doesn't he

come here every day to see me? and he's said many a time that I was all he had left in the world to love."

"Katy! Katy!" ejaculated Mrs. Lamb, more perplexed than before, "you must not——"

"Don't say I must not go with father!" The child spoke so quickly that the utterance of Mrs. Lamb was checked. "You've been very good to me; and I've always minded you, haven't I, Mrs. Lamb?"

"Yes, yes, Katy, you've been a good little girl, and I love you just as much as if you were my own child." The heart of Mrs. Lamb was full, and her voice unsteady.

"Oh, then, don't tell me that I can't do what I must do!" said Katy, with a force of expression that left Mrs. Lamb no alternative but submission—at least then—to the child's strange purpose.

"Father! don't go until I see you!" Katy called suddenly down-stairs, as she heard the feet of her father moving along the passage.

"No, dear, I'll wait until you come down," replied Mr. Eldridge.

"I'll be there in a minute."

Katy now drew a step or two nearer to Mrs. Lamb, looking her in the face so fixedly that her dark, deep eyes were felt to possess almost the power of fascination. Suddenly she flung herself on her bosom and clasped her neck with a wild impetuosity never exhibited before.

"Dear, good Mrs. Lamb!" sobbed the child. "I love you! oh, how much I love you! But he is my

father, and I must go with him. Who will care for him if I do not?"

"But, Katy——" said Mrs. Lamb, as soon as she could find voice to speak. The utterance went no further, for the child's soft hand was laid upon her lips.

"I'm coming, father!" The little voice was firm and courageous as it went ringing down the stairs.

Katy had disengaged herself from the arms of Mrs. Lamb, and was moving away.

"One word, child!" Mrs. Lamb called to Katy.

Katy paused and turned partly around.

"Bring your father home here at dinner-time."

"If he will come."

"He must come!"

The doubt expressed by Katy gave a sudden glimpse into the future that made the heart of Mrs. Lamb sink in her bosom. She felt that from this time forth the resolute child was bound to her father and separated from her.

"Mr. Eldridge!" Mrs. Lamb went down a few paces, "you will come back at dinner-time?"

"Thank you! But I cannot say 'yes.' I've troubled you long enough," replied Mr. Eldridge.

"Oh! but you must come! I want you here to-day, particularly. Say 'yes.'"

"Oh, very well, then; yes," returned Mr. Eldridge, in a cheerful voice.

"Why, Katy dear!" Mrs. Lamb heard him say, a moment after, "are you going out with me?"

"Yes, father," answered Katy, and she grasped his hand firmly. Mr. Eldridge made no opposition;

in fact, he was pleased to have her company, and wondered in his heart how it was that Mrs. Lamb had consented to let the child go with him.

Not forty paces had they gone before they were met by one of Mr. Eldridge's drinking-companions. The greeting was very cordial on the part of this friend or crony. Katy looked up into the man's face. A single glance sent a shudder through her frame. The antagonism was mutual; for the man, on gazing down upon the crouching form of the little hunchback and into her unlovely face, exclaimed, coarsely,—

"What little fright is this you have? Oh, I see now," he added; "it's that cripple of yours!"

"Come, father!" Katy drew gently on the arm of her father, who yielded to the impulse and moved away.

"Ha! ha!" laughed the other, gazing after them. "Now, doesn't that beat the dickens?"

The effect of this on the mind of Mr. Eldridge was the reverse of what might be inferred. The first emotion on seeing his old friend was one of pleasure; and if he had been alone he would have been in great danger. But the cruel speech about Katy wrought an instant alienation and dislike; for Katy was to him the dearest thing in life, and to wound her gentle, loving heart was a crime not to be forgiven.

"He's a wicked man, Katy," said Mr. Eldridge, as they moved along.

"He's wicked in his face," replied Katy, looking

up with tear-filled eyes. Ah! how the words "little fright" and "cripple," uttered as they were in most contemptuous tones, had chilled her heart! Not that self-love or pride was assailed; but an oppressive feeling came instantly over her, that seemed as if it would crush out of her young spirit all its new-born hopes. If she were such a fright, how could her father continue to love her? And if he ceased to love her she must cease to be his protecting angel!

To this instant conclusion had her mind come, and well might it fall with icy coldness on her feelings.

"Am I such a fright, father?" she at length found the courage to ask. Her large, penetrating eyes were still brimming with tears as she lifted them again to her father's face. They had walked some distance in silence.

"No, dear," answered her father, speaking tenderly. "It was very wicked for him to say that; indeed it was! A fright? No, no, Katy; you are very beautiful to me. Sometimes, when I look into your eyes, I feel as if I were looking into heaven."

It seemed as if sunlight suddenly breaking through a cloud had fallen upon the face of Katy, making it indeed beautiful.

The door of Mr. Eldridge's office was now reached, and the two were in. Every thing in the room was in disorder and the whole aspect of the place cheerless. The few law-books that remained from the lawyer's once extensive library were scattered around; some on the table, some on the window sill, and some on the floor. Dust lay thick upon

every thing; and the scanty furniture was soiled, dingy, and out of place.

With a woman's instinct, Katy began at once the work of restoration. There was a broom behind one of the doors, and with this the little office was soon swept out. Then table, chairs, and shelves were dusted, and the few light articles which it contained, such as books, pens and ink, paper, &c., laid in order. How changed in a little while was the aspect of every thing! The desolate look departed, and there was something cheerful to the eye whichsoever way it turned. As Katy moved about, earnest and busy, her father would pause to look at her, with a warmer glow in his heart.

"Dear child!" How often were these words repeated in the thoughts of Mr. Eldridge, as his eyes followed her about the office. "For her sake I will be a man again!" With what an emphasis did he say this mentally!—an emphasis that gave strength to the purpose it expressed.

Not half an hour had elapsed from the time Mr. Eldridge returned to his office, when a man named Wilkins, a well-known and influential citizen, came in, saying, as he entered, in an animated way,—

"Why, how are you, Eldridge? What's been the matter? I haven't seen you about for a long time. Have you been sick?"

"Yes; I've been seriously under the weather. But, thanks to a kind heart and good nursing, I am on my feet again; and, please Heaven! I mean to keep standing upright."

"I'm glad to hear you say that, Eldridge! And you look as if you were in earnest," said Mr. Wilkins, in a pleasant way. "Only stick by that resolution, and Arden will yet be proud of you as one of her best citizens."

The heart of Katy leaped in strong impulses as she listened to these words; and she came a little forward from where she sat, and stood and leaned against her father, lifting up to the face of the visitor, as she did so, her large, liquid, beautiful eyes.

"Who is this?" he inquired, kindly, laying his hand on Katy's head and stroking her glossy hair.

"My little Katy," replied Eldridge, gratified at the notice taken of the child.

"Indeed!" The visitor spoke as if surprised at the information. "Your little Katy! She looks like a dear, good girl, as I am sure she is." And Mr. Wilkins stooped down and kissed the child. The impulse to do so was so strong that he could not resist it.

"You've something to live for, Eldridge," he remarked, in a voice that betrayed considerable feeling. His eyes were fixed upon the shrunken features of the child, which, pain-disfigured as they were, seemed but a light veil shadowing the inner beauty of her spirit.

"In the world, but not of it." He spoke now half to himself. "May God keep thee from its evil and sorrow!"

"I have strong hope of you, Eldridge," he said,

a little while after, in a cheerful, encouraging way, his eyes glancing toward Katy as he spoke. "It is said that evil spirits flee in terror at the sight of a little child, its innocence smiting them with intolerable anguish. Keep this gentle, pure-hearted one ever near you, my friend, and the enemies of your soul will stand afar off in fear, leaving you to walk safely onward. Katy," and the visitor laid his hand on her head again, and spoke very impressively, "be to your father a protecting angel. Evil spirits are leagued together for his destruction, and they have gained a fearful power over him. But their spell is broken. Keep ever very near to him, and your presence will hold them, as now, at a distance."

Katy's soul-lit eyes looked steadily upon the man's face while he said these words, and with a womanly intelligence in them that filled him with something of wonder and reverence.

"What have you in the way of business?" asked the visitor, soon after.

"Nothing," replied Eldridge. "But I am here for the transaction of any thing that offers in my line."

"I have some few matters that require attention, and you can do all I want quite as well as anybody I know."

"I am at your service," said Eldridge, speaking with animation. "Whatever you wish done shall have prompt attention on my part; and if, by a favorable word, you can help me to a little business among your friends, you will do me a service for

which I shall ever be grateful. I will not abuse your kind confidence."

Mr. Wilkins glanced toward Katy, who had retired to the other side of the office as soon as business was introduced. He saw that, though seeming to be indifferent, every faculty of her soul was alive, and that she was taking a deep interest in their words. The mute appeal that looked eloquently from her glittering eyes caused him to answer with strong assurances of influence in favor of her father.

"I will do all in my power to serve you, Mr. Eldridge," were his earnestly-spoken words. "Only be true to yourself, and all will come out right in the end."

CHAPTER XXX.

BETTER ASPECTS.

For an hour after Katy went away with her father, Mrs Lamb sat weeping and grieving. A new leaf had been turned in her life-experience, and the page was so full of strange meanings that she trembled in fear and bewilderment. The child had gone forth, never to return to her in the old relation,—never to be to her what she had been; and heart and home were desolate. She had always loved Katy very tenderly; now, something of reverence was blended with her love. All at once the child seemed to have risen above her, and to have acquired new

powers for a mission the holiest on earth. The more she thought of the little one, going out so bravely with her father and assuming the office of guardian and protector, the more she thought of her as heaven-sent, and the sadder grew her heart under the conviction that their ways in life could move on side by side no longer.

Anxiously did Mrs. Lamb wait at the appointed dinner-hour for the return of Katy and her father. They came, just as her over-excited feelings were beginning to feel the chill of disappointment; for their arrival was late. One glance at Mr. Eldridge made her heart leap with pleasure. He walked erect, and his face was pale and calm, and as full of intelligence as when he went forth in the morning. Katy was by his side, holding one of his hands, her countenance radiant with pleasure.

"I've come back, as I promised, Mrs. Lamb," said Eldridge, speaking in a cheerful voice.

"And I'm right glad to see you again, and looking so well and happy," replied Mrs. Lamb. "And how are you, dear?" she added, stooping to Katy and kissing her fondly. "I've missed you so much all the morning that I could do nothing but wander over the house like one possessed."

There was an expression of womanly independence and womanly self-reliance in the face of Katy as she stood beside Mrs. Lamb and looked up into her motherly countenance. She was changed; and the change was manifest, not in any unpleasant assumptions, but simply as a fact. Katy was no longer a

mere child, to be guided and controlled. The warmly-manifested love of Mrs. Lamb she returned with a fervor that showed how deep was her own affection. How gladly would she have fluttered back, like a timid bird, to the bosom of her maternal friend! A few hours' experience in the world outside of the sheltered home where she had been so tenderly cared for revealed many things with which she must come in painful contact; and her heart trembled as her eyes strained themselves to look into the unknown beyond. But she was all the braver in her resolution to walk in the new path she had chosen.

"You must come back at supper-time," said Mrs. Lamb, as Katy and her father were preparing to go out after dinner.

Katy looked up at her father, and waited, in evident concern, for his answer.

"That will be imposing on you," replied Mr. Eldridge. "Too long, as it is, have I burdened you, and as yet I can only render the poor return of gratitude; though, please Heaven, it shall ere long be something more substantial."

"Make no excuses, Mr. Eldridge; only come back at tea-time with Katy. Remember that in taking her away you leave a pledge of return."

"You'll come back, father, won't you?" This inquiry decided Mr. Eldridge.

"If both wish me to do so I cannot well decline. Yes, Mrs. Lamb, I will be with you again at tea-time."

"And remain all night?" added Mrs. Lamb, who,

now that the child had joined herself to her father, had a new motive for extending hospitality to the latter.

"We'll talk about that at tea-time," answered Mr. Eldridge, in no way disinclined to accept an invitation which he saw was extended in the right spirit. And he was the more inclined to do so from the fact that there was in Arden no other door at which he could present himself and find a welcome. His course of life had alienated him from every household; and where guests were received for hire his presence had become an offence. The spirit in which Katy had joined herself to him was not at first clearly understood; but the truth had dawned upon him like the breaking of a new morning, and was becoming clearer every hour. Already the thought of her when darkness should close in upon them had begun to trouble him. He could think of no place where he could go with her and find a home for a single night. Alone he could pass the dark watches, as he had done many times before, on the settee in his office; but Katy must have better provision than that. And so, for her sake, he determined to accept Mrs. Lamb's invitation, at least for that time, and then see what the morrow would bring forth.

The business placed in his hands by the person who had called at his office so opportunely occupied his time all the morning, and still required more time for its completion. With a cheerful, hopeful, earnest spirit, Mr. Eldridge went back to his work,

entering upon it again with something of the old delight which he had felt in his profession. If an evil spirit came to him and excited some dormant cupidity, the instant he felt the kindling desire he lifted his eyes to the form of Katy, and the demon fled

About the middle of the afternoon, Mr. Wilkins, who had scarcely been able to get the thought of little Katy out of his mind for a moment, called in at the office of Mr. Eldridge. His interest in both the father and child was strongly excited. The singular aspect which the case presented filled him with wonder and admiration; and he knew enough of human nature and the power of innocence to feel a lively confidence in the result of a vigorous struggle for the mastery over evil which had evidently begun in the mind of Eldridge.

"He must be helped! Every good man in Arden must come to the rescue!" he said to a friend with whom he conversed on the subject. "I never was so moved by any thing in my life as by the self-devotion of that little deformed child,—his 'Katy,' as he called her, with a tenderness in his voice that made it falter. There is virtue left in his heart! There is ground there not all overrun with weeds and thistles; and it must be sown with good seeds."

"It may be," was answered, a little indifferently, "that your imagination has carried you a little beyond the fact touching Katy. She has probably gone out with her father from some childish impulse But, as to having any matured purpose, such

as you infer, I don't think it is in the little ungainly thing. I've seen her often with Mrs. Lamb, and must say that the wonderful depth and beauty of her eyes, about which you are so enthusiastic, never made any impression on me. She struck me as a very common and rather repulsive child."

"A deformed body and plain features often enshrine a soul of wonderful beauty; and, for all you say, I am not the less assured that the fact is true in the present case. Be that as it may, however, there is an earnest desire on the part of Eldridge to mend his ways; and we must help him, in the name of humanity."

To every one he met Mr. Wilkins communicated the intelligence that Eldridge had commenced a new course of life and under peculiar circumstances. The warm coloring he threw upon the single fact of meeting Katy in her father's office, and the true inferences he had drawn therefrom, awakened a strong interest in many minds; and several influential men of property, who always had more or less business to transact which required legal forms, said that, as soon as the poor broken-down inebriate gave any reasonable evidence of a purpose to reform and attend to his professional duties, they would employ him, as well for their own safety as his encouragement,—no lawyer in Arden having acquired a better reputation.

"Busy at work?" said Mr. Wilkins, cheerfully, as he came into the little office, where he found Eldridge writing at a table on which every thing was

laid in order. A neat bunch of flowers, in fresh water, stood near him, diffusing a pleasant fragrance through the room. But Katy was not there. Mr. Wilkins glanced around in search of her, and felt disappointed at not meeting the little face he had so confidently expected to see.

"Yes," replied Eldridge, "and I hope to keep busy. I'm making good progress in your matters, though a little slower than I anticipated. There have been some recent laws passed which affect the transfer of property in this particular manner, and I have spent several hours in sifting them out and comparing them with previous enactments not annulled by their passage."

"'Slow and sure' is a good rule," said Mr. Wilkins. "Don't hurry the work."

"It shall be all done right; you may depend on that, Mr. Wilkins."

"I don't see your little Katy," said the visitor, in a voice that betrayed his anxiety on that head.

"She's here, bless her gentle heart!" replied Eldridge, a light breaking over his countenance. "You'll find her in the yard,—a little busy bee among the flowers. Just see how clean she has weeded that border! Where, yesterday, not a flower was able to show its feeble head above the tall grass and rank cicuta, a few lady's-slippers, petunias, and larkspurs now lift their white, purple, and crimson blossoms, smiling in the sunshine. I stood and looked at them and her a few minutes ago, until the tears came into my eyes. All the manhood of my nature

was stirred to the very depths, Mr. Wilkins! God bless the child, and make me as true to her as she is now to me!"

"Amen! God bless and help you both!" was fervently responded.

"Where are you staying now?" asked Mr. Wilkins, as he walked back from the window.

"I have been for a couple of weeks at the house of Mrs. Lamb. She nursed me like a second mother—as she has been to my child—during my unhappy illness. But she is poor, and I have burdened her too long. I am going back there, on her kind invitation, this evening, but to-morrow will have to make some other arrangement."

"Why not board with her?" suggested Mr. Wilkins.

"That would hardly be convenient or agreeable," said Mr. Eldridge.

"Are you certain?"

"I have, at least, so inferred."

"Perhaps it might be altogether so. Mrs. Lamb has been your Katy's second mother, and, no doubt, loves her dearly."

"Oh, yes. A mother could not love her better," replied Mr. Eldridge.

"That's the place for you," said Mr. Wilkins, confidently. "You'd better talk with Mrs. Lamb about it. Her house is small, but it will do very well for the present. In less than a year I hope to see you in so prosperous a business that you can rent her a larger one, if need be."

The thought of Mr. Eldridge reverted instantly to his two sons, who had been turned off into the world to shift for themselves; and he remembered how, under the care of Mrs. Lamb, their very natures seemed to change, and the children who had lived for years in strife harmonized under her wise and loving rule. He had heard nothing from them for a whole year, and the intelligence last received had left but a vague impression on his mind. "Poor boys!" he said, mentally, as thought continued to dwell upon them.

"I should not object to the arrangement," remarked Eldridge, in answer to the suggestion of Mr. Wilkins.

"Then by all means try and make it," said the latter, who saw at a glance how much of safety for the reforming man there would be in such a home, where not even the shadow of temptation could enter.

The good wishes of Mr. Wilkins did not die in his thoughts. Not content with suggesting a home at Mrs. Lamb's, he called that very afternoon upon the kind-hearted woman and talked with her freely about Mr. Eldridge. He found her not only willing to make the arrangement, but anxious on the subject, particularly on Katy's account. The more she thought about the child's going out into the world to be the self-devoted companion of a father who had fallen, through vice and intemperance, to the lowest degree of degradation, the more deeply was she distressed. Before her mind passed the whole cata-

logue of evils she might be called to endure; and her heart grew sick at the review. Love, pity, humanity, all united in urging upon her the adoption of some means to save Katy from the sad consequences that were almost certain to fall upon her head.

A brief but earnest conversation with Mr. Wilkins made her duty plain to Mrs. Lamb; and when Mr. Eldridge came back with Katy about sunset she was entirely ready to offer him a home if he would accept the humble provision she could make. Mr. Eldridge had no serious objection to offer, and so, to the satisfaction of all parties, it was settled that he should be a boarder, for a time at least, in the house of Mrs. Lamb.

After tea, the lamps were lighted in the small "best room," and Mrs. Lamb went in there with her sewing. Katy had some work to do also, and drew her chair up to the table on which the light burned: it was a chair made higher than the rest, so that her shrunken body could be raised to a comfortable position.

How old home-loves awakened in the heart of Mr. Eldridge as he looked at the little group—of two may so be called—sitting around the table, with the lamps shining upon their faces, lighting them up with something of beauty! A crowd of memories came rushing into perception; a flood of strong emotions swept through his soul. The old home-feeling revived, and his heart yearned toward his

children, desiring, with an intense desire, to have them gathered at his own hearth again.

The first thought of Mr. Eldridge, when the lights were brought and the table arranged for the evening's work, was to get a book and read to Katy and Mrs. Lamb. But these thronging memories of the past and pictures of what might be in the future so absorbed him that he remained sitting a little apart, in the shadow of the room, silent and musing. Images of the times gone by could not arise in his thoughts without the form of his wife presenting itself. There could be no home-greetings without her presence among the children,—no heart-warming recollections of the better times that did not include a face once the light of life. Never before, since that unhappy day so fatal to the peace of both, had Mr. Eldridge thought of his wife with the softened feelings that were now experienced; and he was more inclined to blame himself than the passionate, wrong-minded woman to whom he had conceded nothing when the smallest sign of yielding on his part might have brought her back humbled and changed to the home so madly deserted.

Where was she? The question under this altered condition of mind startled him. Years had passed since the day of their separation. But once since then had he looked upon her face; and, from the time she left Arden, no word of her had ever reached him. She might be dead, for all he knew to the contrary; —was, perhaps As he thought of her his feelings grew more tender, and something of the old love

began to revive. She did not present herself in any repulsive aspects, but as in the earlier days of their wedded life,—gentle, affectionate, thoughtful of his comfort, and making his home radiant with the light of love.

We may not wonder that Mr. Eldridge was silent for that evening, burdened as were his thoughts with such a weight, nor that he was restless through the night that followed, startled often from sleep by the too vivid presence of dreaming images.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A BRIGHTENING FUTURE.

We cannot linger to describe the daily life of Mr. Eldridge, nor to draw pictures, full of interest as they would be, of the many scenes in which Katy bore a part. The child, true to her great mission, never, for many months, left her father's side while he was abroad in the world to him so full of danger.

At first there were some to speak light or scoffing words and to assail her ears with language that chilled her heart and caused her steps to falter. But she only shrunk the closer to her father's side and grasped his hand with a firmer pressure.

Not long, however, did this continue. The general sentiment ran too strongly in her favor as soon

as the meaning of her unvarying presence with her father was known. Numbers who had stood for a long time aloof from Mr. Eldridge as one hopelessly wedded to a fatal vice now took a new interest, because there was a new and strong ground of hope. They saw his step growing firmer, his head more erect, his countenance more elevated; and the angel by his side gave them confidence in the change as permanent. Business increased, and, in the concentration of his thoughts thereon and prompt execution of whatever was confided to his care, new power was gained; for in all useful work there is a sphere of safety.

At first the business intrusted to Mr. Eldridge went little beyond the execution of legal documents involving the transfer of property; but court-cases came in time, and he took his old place at the bar, gradually rising there toward his former high position. Judge Gray never seemed to feel very easy when Eldridge argued a cause before him. Their personal intercourse was of the most distant character; and, when allusion was made in his presence to the reformed life of the lawyer, he either gave a doubtful shrug, or said, half contemptuously, "Wait a while." Once or twice he had spoken in the presence of Mr. Wilkins in a sneering manner of little Katy, who was still the unvarying companion of Mr. Eldridge, even going with him into court, yet always in the most unobtrusive manner, and, as far as possible, in a way to attract little or no attention. Mr. Wilkins answered nothing, though words of re-

buke trembled on his tongue. One day, as he was standing near the court-house door, talking with the judge, Mr. Eldridge passed near them, and in a few moments the stooping form of Katy came gliding noiselessly by.

"What do you want here?" exclaimed the judge, in a harsh, angry voice, so startling the child that she stood suddenly still and looked up with a frightened countenance. The man's voice and air showed a large amount of pent-up ill-feeling now betraying itself.

"You'd better run off home! That's the place for little girls," added the judge, speaking less harshly.

The father of Katy had passed within the building, and knew nothing of this petty assault by Judge Gray. The child, startled at first, recovered herself in a few moments, and moved forward again in the direction she was going when her steps were so suddenly arrested.

"That was a cruel thing," said Mr. Wilkins, firmly fixing his eyes upon the face of Judge Gray;—"a very cruel thing!"

"I didn't ask your opinion of the matter," retorted the judge.

"But you have the benefit of it, notwithstanding," said Mr. Wilkins. "I didn't believe there was a man in Arden with a heart hard enough to wound the feelings of that noble child."

"Noble! Pah!" Judge Gray's manner expressed the most bitter contempt. "I'm sick of all this

cant! *I* see nothing in her but an ugly, forward little imp, entirely out of her place."

Unwilling to hear such epithets applied to one whose very name had come to signify, in his thought, angelic self-devotion, Mr. Wilkins turned away from the judge and entered the court-house. He did not find Katy in her accustomed seat; and it was some time before his eyes, searching in every part of the room, discovered her shrinking close beside a pillar, with the evident purpose of avoiding observation. In a little while he noticed her going almost stealthily toward her father. She whispered a few words that appeared to surprise him; but he smiled and nodded assent. Katy then retired from the court-room, and did not appear there again during the morning session.

"What was Katy saying to you just now?" asked Mr. Wilkins, going over to where Eldridge was seated.

"She is hemming some handkerchiefs for me," replied Mr. Eldridge, "and wanted to go back to the office and finish them by the time court adjourned."

"Oh! was that all?" Mr. Eldridge looked a little curious; but Wilkins said no more.

From that time Katy went no more to the court-house with her father; but she always accompanied him to his office, and remained there to return with him at mid-day and evening.

When Mr. Eldridge was informed of Judge Gray's conduct toward Katy, he was strongly indignant;

and it required all the influence possessed by Mr. Wilkins to prevent a quarrel between them.

"Let it all pass, my friend," said the latter, soothing the father's excitement. "The judge has only exhibited a phase of character he had been wiser to conceal."

"He's a villain!" exclaimed Eldridge.

"Don't call hard names," returned Mr. Wilkins.

"The tables turn sometimes," said Eldridge, calming a little. "I have been down, and very low down; and Judge Gray is something to blame for the fatal declension. But I am on my feet again, and hourly renewing my strength. Time will one day see us—mark me!—in far different relations to each other than we now occupy."

"I do not think his feet are on safe ground," remarked Mr. Wilkins.

"I know they are not. Judge Gray, unless there be in his moral constitution a saving element rarely found in men of his class, will run down rapidly in a few years. I know something of his habits and associates. Well, well, I must not wish him evil, even if he have done me wrong."

And Eldridge softened his feelings toward the judge, and tried, though in a feeble way, to forgive him.

As Mr. Eldridge gradually acquired strength of character and put on the externals of a higher manhood, Katy, from a natural instinct of what was right, withdrew herself more and more from public observation, and sometimes did not accompany him

to his office nor visit him there for days together. But she always met him with so bright a face when he returned home, and gave the parting kiss so lovingly when he went out, that her spirit remained present with him for good even when she was absent in the body.

Within a year from the time Mr. Eldridge began in earnest the work of reformation he had attained a position that surprised every one. Strict attention to business, added to the reputation of being one of the best lawyers in the country, soon brought him important cases, most of which he conducted to a favorable issue. His income steadily increased; but this brought him not into temptation, for he had ends to accomplish that would require means far beyond what he could yet command. As soon as he found himself able to do so, he rented a larger house than the one occupied by Mrs. Lamb, and installed the good lady therein as mistress. Then he brought his two boys home. Rough usage had they met with; but both were subdued, and thankful in their heart of hearts to get home again. They had grown into stout, coarse, strong lads, and none in the village remembered them as the two sprightly little boys who played about their father's dwelling, years before, ere the shadows had fallen dark across its threshold. Mr. Eldridge had them entered at the best school in Arden, and in the evenings spent most of his time in assisting them in their various studies.

Dear Katy! how happy she was in this blessed

re-union! In all possible ways she sought to make home bright and pleasant for every one. Very tenderly was she loved, for all felt the warmth of her loving heart. It was rarely that any thought of her deformity, or saw in her homely face any thing but the spiritual beauty which shone through as if it were but a filmy veil.

One evening, (it was about three months from the time William and Jacob had been restored to their home,) Mr. Eldridge seemed more thoughtful than usual, and sat apart from the family, with his hand shading his face, as if desirous to conceal its troubled expression. Katy, too, from some cause, was not cheerful. She had been moving about since tea-time, busy in the arrangement of various household matters; but her voice, which so often broke out in little snatches of song, did not once stir the air with its low melodies. At length she drew her chair to the table where William and Jacob were busy with their lessons, and began the work of mending a garment. But the pressure of thought on her young mind every now and then caused her hands to fall idle in her lap; and she would sit sometimes, for minutes together, so still that she seemed like a statue.

At length Katy pushed herself back from the table and laid her sewing upon a chair, as if hopeless of accomplishing any thing for the time in that direction. For a little while she looked earnestly toward her father, and then, crossing over to where he sat, still so absorbed in thought as to be unconscious of any thing passing in the room, pressed up

closely to his side and drew her arm around his neck. Mr. Eldridge returned the endearing act, and at the same time kissed her as he drew her tightly to his heart. She laid her head back upon his shoulder, and he bent his face down until his cheek was pressed to hers.

"Father!" Katy spoke in a low whisper.

Mr. Eldridge raised his head and looked down upon her face.

"What, dear?" he inquired.

"Don't you wish mother was here?"

Katy's eyes were closed, and she did not open them, fearing to look into her father's face to see the effect of her question. She did not know that her words were but an echo to his thoughts.

"Yes, love." The answer came also in a whisper —a whisper meant to conceal the quicker heart-beat her query occasioned.

"Where is she, father?" Never before had Katy, while speaking with him, referred in any way to her mother.

"Heaven only knows!" replied Mr. Eldridge, his voice betraying deep emotion.

"Can't we find her, father? Oh, I wish she was home! Last night I had such a sweet dream about her!"

"What was it, Katy?" The voice that trembled with excitement a moment before was forced into an even tone.

"I dreamed that I was lying in bed awake, and that mother came in and sat by my side, stooping

down and kissing me. I have felt her kiss on my lips ever since, father! Then she laid her hand on my head and smoothed my hair, and said,—oh! so many times,—'Dear Katy! dear Katy!'"

The child's voice grew unsteady, and then failed her. A warm drop fell upon the hand of Mr. Eldridge: he knew it was a tear. Closely he clasped her with his arm. But he answered nothing more.

In a little while Katy withdrew herself from the embrace of her father, and, going back to the table, took up her work, and bent down over it so low that the expression of her face could not be seen. Mr. Eldridge remained silent and reserved until early bedtime, and then retired without a word to any one,—a thing for him unusual.

CHAPTER XXXII.

REPENTANCE.

"AUNT MARGARET!"

The voice that called was low and feeble. Mrs. Angell arose quickly and went up to the little spare chamber, as it was always called, though for years it had not been without an occupant, and leaned over the bed. A pale face lay among the snowy pillows.

"Aunt Margaret, don't you think I might sit up a little? I feel stronger to-day," said the invalid.

"The air is very mild," answered Mrs. Angell,

"so there is no danger of taking cold. Yes; maybe it would do you good, Harriet. Let me draw the large chair to the window, so that you can look out upon the trees and fields."

"Thank you, Aunt Margaret. You are so very kind to me," said the invalid, after she had walked, with Mrs. Angell's assistance, to the window, from which she glanced as she sunk into the great easy-chair. "How beautiful every thing looks!" was added, after she had gazed for some moments on the fine prospect that lay before her eyes.

"How long is it since I came here, Aunt Margaret?" The speaker had remained silent for some moments, looking out upon the landscape, but for most of the time seeing it not, the inward vision obscuring the outward.

"It is four years this very month," said Mrs. Angell.

"Four years! Yes, yes; that long time has passed. How swiftly the days have flown! And some of them, Aunt Margaret, have been sorrowful days for you. Poor Phœbe! Why did not the arrow find my heart instead of hers, and leave you the blessing of a child? What am I to you?"

"Harriet!" There was a gentle reproof in the kind voice of Mrs. Angell.

"I know what you would say, Aunt Margaret. Ah, if I only had your beautiful reliance on the all-wise Being who knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust, I might yet find peace on earth, though heavily burdened with memories that

often seem as if they would crush my very life out!"

"Memories of what, Harriet?"

"Oh, Aunt Margaret!" The ejaculation indicated both pain and surprise.

"Harriet!" (Mrs. Angell laid her hand, with an earnest pressure, on the arm of her niece,) "it is the first time in the lapse of nearly four years that I have questioned you, even remotely, touching your past history; and my wish to do so now springs from no idle curiosity, but from a strong desire to do you good. Unless the physician knows something about the origin of the malady he seeks to cure, he cannot wisely administer his remedies. To me your whole past history is a blank. I am even a stranger to the name you bear in right of marriage. I know nothing of the ways in which your feet have trodden from the time I laid my hand among the soft brown curls that clustered about your childish face, until you came to me a heart-burdened woman, fleeing from the world and seeking to hide yourself in the deepest retirement."

"Help me back to the bed, Aunt Margaret. I begin to feel faint. I thought I was stronger than I am." The invalid spoke with quivering lips and an unsteady voice.

Mrs. Angell assisted her to rise, and, with the loving tenderness of a mother, supported her feeble steps across the room until she gained the bed.

"I am still very weak, Aunt Margaret," she said,

in a mournful voice. "How slowly strength returns!"

Mrs. Angell did not reply to this remark, but stood silently looking down upon her niece, who, after returning her gaze for a few moments, said,—

"Go on, Aunt Margaret. I've many times desired to talk with you of the past, but my heart has always failed me when I tried to speak. Say on."

"You came to me a heart-burdened woman," Mrs. Angell resumed, in her gentle, loving way. "I could see that in the battle of life you had suffered wrong."

"Oh, Aunt Margaret! a deep and blasting wrong!" The pale face of the invalid flushed, and an indignant light burned in her eyes.

"And it was also plain to me, Harriet, that in this battle of life you had dealt hard blows as well as received them."

There was no answer to this.

"And I have often thought," continued Mrs. Angell, "that there might be some living who carry about with them wounds you have inflicted, —wounds, it may be, that still bleed, as do your own."

The long lashes of the invalid fell low upon her cheeks, and her pale lips drew close together.

"You have greatly changed from what you were, Harriet, when, four years ago, you sought a hiding-place in my humble home,—changed in exterior, and, I am sure, in heart also. Impatient by nature,

you have repressed your quick impulses, and, with a gentleness, kindness, and self-devotion not by any means hereditary qualities, have borne with, cared for, and patiently instructed my motherless grandchildren, until, from bent, twisted, and gnarled young plants, they are growing up into pleasant trees."

"Don't, don't, Aunt Margaret! It is to your gentleness—a daily reproof to my selfish impatience—that we are indebted for the great change which has passed upon these children. I cannot receive the praise that is due to yourself. Left only to my care, they would have remained gnarled and unbeautiful plants. But, Aunt Margaret,"—and the invalid raised herself on one arm, and spoke in a voice that thrilled to the heart of Mrs. Angell,—"did you think, while I taught these children daily, and daily ministered to them, that my eyes never pictured another home than this, and that my heart never yearned toward other children,—flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone? Oh, Aunt Margaret!"

The pent-up anguish of years gushed forth, and the unhappy invalid, weak in body and mind, buried her face in one of the pillows, and sobbed wildly for some minutes.

"Harriet, what of this other home? what of these other children?" said Mrs. Angell, as soon as this strong outburst of emotion had subsided. "You must tell me all: but not now; you are too weak."

"I must speak now, if at all," was answered. "To-morrow pride may seal my lips in silence."

"Say on, then." And Mrs. Angell bent her ear close down to the pillow on which the head of her niece had fallen.

The history and confession then and there given were complete, with the single exception of the studied concealment of her name; and when Mrs. Eldridge closed her sad narrative the only response her aged relative made was to press her lips to her forehead, and say, in a troubled voice,—

"My poor, unhappy child!"

Never, since the day that saw Mrs. Eldridge go forth so blindly and madly from her home, had the whole aspect of her case looked so unlovely in her own eyes as now, even though, in opening the past to Mrs. Angell, she had sought to give every incident she related a bearing favorable to her own side.

"I'm afraid, Aunt Margaret," she said, after many minutes of silence had passed, "that even on my own showing I have not been altogether free from blame."

"Your Mrs. Weakly and Mrs. Glendy were bad advisers," was the old lady's simple answer.

"They certainly did not prove themselves very fast friends," said Mrs. Eldridge.

Another long silence followed. Mrs. Angell was confounded by the history of her niece. The abandonment of her home and children on the provocation alleged seemed to her gentle spirit so extra-

ordinary that she could not realize the state of mind by which her relative had been impelled.

"Do not think too evil of me, Aunt Margaret." Mrs. Eldridge raised her eyes with a timid look to the face of Mrs. Angell. "If there is any atonement for wrong in suffering, I may at least claim forgiveness from you."

"Against me you have never sinned, Harriet," was gravely answered.

"Then God forgive me!" exclaimed Mrs. Eldridge, wildly striking her hands together above her head.

"Harriet," said Mrs. Angell, deeply moved at this, "God always forgives the forgiving. He never turns his face away in anger; and when we think him implacable it is only the image of our own accusing and unrelenting spirit that is seen. It is plain, Harriet, that through all these long years of suffering and humiliation you have never forgiven your husband. Look into your heart and see if it be not so."

"It is even as you say. I have not forgiven him." Mrs. Angell had waited for an answer to her suggestion; and it came at length

"Was he all to blame?" she asked.

"No, no; I was in many things to blame, Aunt Margaret. I did not make him a patient, home-loving wife. I am irritable by nature, and was not always careful to repress its exhibition toward him and our children. But he altered very much as time went on, and that only gave me causes of dis-

turbance not existing in the early years of our married life. He grew exacting, and at times a little imperious, seeking to trammel my freedom. It is not in my nature to endure that; and, when he towered up before me a demanding and forbidding tyrant, I rebelled, counting no price too great for liberty."

The pale face of Mrs. Eldridge had flushed with the excitement of her feelings.

"Your husband was a home-loving man, you say?" Mrs. Angell asked the question in a quiet voice, but one that was full of meaning.

"Yes; he was very domestic in his feelings."

"You were by the marriage-pledges made the genius of his home."

Mrs. Eldridge did not answer.

"Were you a good genius, transmuting all the heart's baser metal into the gold of loving-kindness? Did sunshine always attend your presence, or were clouds the garments in which you clothed yourself? Harriet, you need not answer to me these questions; but let me conjure you to answer hem truly to your own heart."

The invalid's eyes were shut tightly, the fringing lids lying darkly above her cheeks.

"He was a home-loving man!" Mrs. Angell repeated the words as if uttering them to herself. "To how many thousands and tens of thousands of lonely-hearted wives would home be a paradise if this could be said of their husbands! A home-loving man! Why, this includes half the domestic

virtues. Let your thoughts go far back, Harriet, to the early days of your wedded life. Was he not a true, loving husband? Did he seek only his own gratification, or was your delight his pleasure?"

"And what wrought the change?" Mrs. Eldridge had answered nothing, and so her aunt assumed that her husband had been all that was supposed. "Oh, Harriet, deal faithfully by yourself and him! If the first error was on your part, forgive all that came in the sad array of consequences. If home was to him the dearest place imagination could picture, how sad must he have been when the truth came forcing itself upon his unwilling convictions that he had erred in the choice of a home-companion!—that he had taken one to his heart who——"

"Aunt Margaret!" (the eyes of Mrs. Eldridge flew open,) "do you wish to kill me by words? What are you saying?"

"Have I put the case too strongly?" Mrs. Angell spoke very calmly and very seriously. "Did you fulfil to him the promise of your betrothal? Let your heart answer, and answer truly. He was a home-loving man. 'Home-loving!' Think of that, Harriet. If what a man loves beyond all else in life changes its pleasant aspect and become unlovely, is there not danger of his changing also? There are thousands of sad, lonely, hopeless wives to-day, whose selfish, thoughtless, unloving disregard to the young husbands' peculiar wants has worked a hopeless alienation between themselves and men who

would have loved them, even unto death, with an unswerving affection."

"Oh, spare me! spare me!" Mrs. Eldridge cried out, in anguish. "The blasting image you have conjured up is looking at me as from a mirror! I see myself, hideously deformed! Oh that I could die!"

"Say, rather, Harriet, 'Oh that I could live, to restore again the old landmarks, to create a new home and fill all its chambers with the golden atmosphere of love!'"

"Ah! if that were possible! if that were possible!" sighed Mrs. Eldridge.

"It may be all possible, Harriet," said her aunt. "He who guided your footsteps hither, and who hath kept you up to this time, has reserved you, I trust, for this good work. The hearth so long fireless may yet grow bright and warm again, the desolate home smile in the light of love's own sunshine, the walls so long silent echo to the glad sound of children's voices!"

"Hark!" Mrs. Eldridge raised herself on her elbow and listened. A brief silence had followed the last words of Mrs. Angell, and in the pause the sound of footsteps was heard in the walk below the window.

"Does Mrs. Angell live here?" The question, distinctly heard in the chamber, was asked in a manly voice.

Mrs. Eldridge gave a sudden start, flushed, and then, growing pale as ashes, sunk back on the pillow.

Descending to the door, Mrs. Angell met a well-dressed, intelligent-looking man, who said, in a tone of inquiry,—

"Is this Mrs. Angell?"

By his side stood a little girl, deformed in person and with a shrunken, hueless face; but her eyes shone like brilliant stars.

"I am Mrs. Angell," was the simple response.

"And I am Morgan Eldridge."

"What! Morgan Eldridge? It cannot be!" Mrs. Angell was for a few moments so overcome with surprise that she remained standing in the door, not even inviting the strangers to enter. But, recovering herself, she grasped the hand of Mr. Eldridge and drew him into the house.

"Is my mother here?" Two small hands grasped eagerly the arm of Mrs. Angell, and a pair of dark, earnest eyes were lifted to her face. The voice thrilled through her bosom like a sudden wail of sad music.

"Your mother, child? Who is your mother?"

"Katy! Oh, Katy!" A feeble voice called down from the chamber.

"It is mother!" And the child sprung away, gliding from the room and up the stairs almost as swiftly as a bird on the wing.

"I'm bewildered,—confounded!" said Mrs. Angell, as soon as she had a little recovered herself. "Morgan Eldridge! Did I hear aright?"

"That is my name, Mrs. Angell; and here, in this village, my unhappy life began. Ah, how many,

many times have I wished that I had died when my mother died!"

"And are you the husband of my niece Harriet?"

"Yes! yes!"

"Father! dear father!" (Katy had come gliding down from the room above as swiftly as she had ascended, and now grasped her father's hand;) "come up, and see mother."

"Go, Morgan; go!" said Mrs. Angell. "The first ray of sunshine that has lighted her heart for years will shine there when she looks upon your forgiving face and hears, as of old, your voice in words of loving-kindness. Go; go to her quickly; and may God grant you both the deep joy of reconciliation!"

"Won't you remain with me, dear?" added Mrs. Angell, taking the hand of Katy, as Mr. Eldridge was passing from the room. Katy's face was wet with tears, but her large dark eyes were full of gladness. She suffered Mrs. Angell to draw her to a seat.

"What ails my mother?" There was in the voice of Katy a peculiar sweetness, rarely met with in persons who have suffered a like injury with tha which she had sustained. It was scarcely possible to feel repulsion toward her, or even to be unpleasantly conscious of her deformity, after her tones had once fallen upon the ear. Mrs. Angell, from the moment she heard her voice, felt her heart moving toward the child with a strong attraction; and the more so from the deep love she evidently felt toward the mother who had deserted her.

Drawing her arm around Katy, and pressing her close to her side, she answered,—

'Your mother has been sick with a fever, and is very weak. But the fever is broken, and she will be growing better every day."

"Are you my mother's aunt?" Katy lifted her large liquid eyes to the face of Mrs. Angell with a look of tender confidence.

"Yes, dear; I am your mother's aunt Margaret."

"How long has she been here?"

"About four years," was answered.

"All the time?"

"Yes, dear; all the time."

There was a slight change in the expression of Katy's face, and a shadow seemed to fall over and dim the brightness of her eyes. She looked downward for a few moments, and then, with an inexpressible burst of grief, laid her face in the lap of Mrs. Angell and sobbed so violently that every part of her frame quivered like a leaf in the wind.

Mrs. Angell offered no words of comfort; for what could she say? how was she to reach a heart the secret ways to which she had never learned and to the treasured experiences of which she was a stranger? and so the child was left to sob her emotion away. But the hand of Mrs. Angell moved softly all the while amid her dark brown hair.

"Katy!"

"Yes, father." And the child started eagerly at the call from the room up to which her father had gone a little while before.

"Go, and heaven bless you!" said Mrs. Angell, who, with unerring instinct, saw in Katy the love-link that was to bind together hearts once rudely torn asunder, but now approaching again, each impelled by a strong necessity.

Let a few minutes pass: and now we draw the curtain for a glimpse into the chamber of reconciliation.

Mr. Eldridge is sitting upon the bed, one arm drawn tightly around the wasted form of his wife, who is lying against his breast and gazing up into his face with love-lit eyes that are stirring old, delicious memories. The beauty of young maidenhood is veiling in his sight her wan and wasted countenance. The Harriet of love's young dreams is in his clasping arms, and the kisses that are pressed to her lips are full of young love's ardor. Katy stands leaning her head upon her father and looking down into the face which had never been forgotten though always remembered with pain. She is calmest of the three; for the joy that fills her heart is too deep for outward expression.

We let the curtain fall again.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ANOTHER RECONCILIATION.

Scarcely had Katy left the room, on the call of her father, before old Mrs. Burden came in, as she was in the habit of doing almost every day.

"How is your niece?" she inquired.

"Better. She improves slowly, but steadily."

"What's the matter, Mrs. Angell? You have a strange look! Has any thing happened?"

Mrs. Burden had become aware of something unusual in the expression of her neighbor's face.

"Yes; something very unusual has happened," was answered:—"something that has confounded me, and will confound you also. Harriet's husband is here!"

"Mrs. Angell!"

"It is true; and he is with her now. He came only a few minutes ago, bringing one of her children with him,—a little broken-backed girl, with the darkest, deepest, loveliest pair of eyes you ever looked into, and a voice that sounds like music."

"I *am* confounded! Her husband? I didn't know that she had a husband living. Did you?"

"I inferred as much, but never knew all her sad history until to-day; and scarcely was the narrative

completed when he arrived. She left him in a mo ment of blind passion, after what she regarded as a deep provocation; and they have never met since until now."

"Who or what is he?" asked Mrs. Burden.

"I can answer the who, but not the what; and the answer will make your heart leap. His name is Morgan Eldridge."

The face of Mrs. Burden grew instantly pale. Her lips quivered in the effort to speak, but no sound came through them. Then she seemed to shrink in her chair, as if a crushing weight were laid upon her. A very long time she remained silent and almost motionless.

"Are you certain about this, Mrs. Angell?" she said at last, making an effort to arouse herself. Her voice was singularly changed from its usual tones, which were always firm, and at times almost imperative.

"He said that his name was Morgan Eldridge, and referred to this place as known to him of old."

"Where is he now?" asked Mrs. Burden.

"Up-stairs, with Harriet," was answered.

"Will you ask him to come down?" said Mrs. Burden.

"Perhaps you had better wait a little while before seeing him. Take time to recover yourself and collect your thoughts."

"I must see him now, Mrs. Angell! Wait? Impossible! An hour's suspense would kill me!"

Mrs. Angell still hesitated.

"Oh! will you not call him down?"

"They must be left alone for a little while," said Mrs. Angell. "Intrusion would now be cruel."

But Mrs. Burden could not repress her strong impatience. Two or three times she moved across the room in a very disturbed manner; then the excitement of suspense became too strong for her, and, breaking through all restraint, she passed from the little parlor and went hurriedly up-stairs. Mrs. Angell called after her, but she took no heed of her warning words.

Grouped very much as the reader saw them in a brief glance a little while before were Mr. and Mrs. Eldridge and Katy when Mrs. Burden entered abruptly the chamber. Before either spoke, or the group had time for any change of position, the excited woman exclaimed,—

"Oh, Morgan! My son! my son! Can it be possible that you still live, and that these eyes, which have so longed for years to look upon your living face, now see you in the body? Morgan! Morgan! My son!"

Slowly, as if there was going on in his heart a powerful struggle, did Mr. Eldridge disengage himself from the arms of his wife and daughter. Slowly he raised himself up, his countenance scarcely changing, and moved a pace or two toward Mrs Burden. Still now as a statue she remained, her eyes fixed upon his countenance. He paused, without speaking; then advanced a step; paused again,

and then sprung forward, saying, as he did so, in a voice full of emotion,—

"Mother! mother!"

Mrs. Burden's arms were thrown eagerly around him; and her voice, breaking into sobs, murmured,—

"My son! my son! God be praised that we meet again!"

A little while she stood clasping his manly form; then, pushing him from her, she looked earnestly, yet with a fond expression, into his face.

"Yes, yes," she said; "it is indeed my Morgan. I would have known him still among a thousand. Oh, you unforgiving one!" she added, with something of chiding in her voice, "how could you find it in your heart to mete out to one who loved you and was proud of you such a long, weary, cruel punishment?"

"I had great provocation, mother," was replied, in a steady voice and with a changing countenance.

"Hush! hush! Ah, Morgan, we both had provocation. But I was older, and should have been wiser, and was, therefore, most to blame. You were a young, indulged, self-willed boy, who might easily have been led, and I was an inexperienced stepmother, with high notions of order and rule. As flint and steel we came together,—I the flint and you the steel; and, as it usually happens in such cases, the flint suffered most in the collision:—how much, you, Morgan, may never know. Ah, my son, I always loved you and was always proud of you,—prouder than of any who were my own flesh and

blood; and there has not been a moment in all this long, long period of separation when I would not gladly have resigned the dearest thing left me on earth to have realized the blessing of this hour."

"Let the past and all its sad memories perish!" said Mr. Eldridge, evincing strong emotion. "And now, mother, let me introduce my wife and child. One you know, of course, though not until now as the wife of your long-absent one; the other you can never know fully,—God bless her!"

And he led Mrs. Burden across the room. "Harriet! Can this be indeed possible?" exclaimed Mrs. Burden, as she bent down and kissed the pale face of Mrs. Eldridge.

"Are we not all phantoms in a strange dream?" said the latter. "I feel as if I would awake suddenly into the sad realities which seem to have passed away. Oh, Mrs. Burden, to think that, in fleeing from my husband, like a mad woman that I was, I should come to the very home of his childhood!"

"'Man proposes, God disposes.'" It was the mild voice of Mrs. Angell, who had come up to th chamber, feeling that her presence might be useful. "And now, my friends," she added, "let the mantle of forgiveness fall over the past in this hour of joyful reconciliation. You have all, doubtless, sinned much and forgiven much. Only let the forgiveness be complete."

"O God! help me to forget the past!" said Mr. Eldridge, in a voice that was full of deep entreaty.

"May *I* remember it only as a guide to the future!" murmured the white lips of the exhausted invalid, over whose pallid features a deathly hue was falling.

"Oh, Harriet!" exclaimed her husband.

But his voice only reached her ears like the voice of one calling from a far distance. An instant more and every sense was locked in profound unconsciousness.

The excitement of the past hour had been too much for Mrs. Eldridge, weakened as she was by a recent severe illness. For a little while both Mr. Eldridge and Katy were strongly agitated and in great fear; but Mrs. Angell quieted their alarm as much by her undisturbed manner as by her earnest assurances that no cause for anxiety existed. "It is only a fainting-fit, and will soon pass over." So fully assured was her voice that their hearts took comfort, and they waited in trembling hope, watching for the first signs of returning animation. And suspense was not long.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A SCENE WITH JUDGE GRAY.

"I MUST go back with you, Morgan," said Mrs. Eldridge, in a pleading voice. "Don't leave me!"

"It will only be for a very short time, Harriet. There are certain preparations which I have set my heart on making for your return. Be patient a little while. I will come back for you very soon."

"How can I live an hour away from you, Morgan?" And the old love that won and warmed his heart "in the long ago" was in her eyes.

"Only a few short weeks, Harriet, and then—"

"Weeks! Don't say weeks! They will be to me like years."

"Let it be as he desires, Harriet," said Mrs. Angell; "and have some regard for me also. How can I give you all up in a single moment? I cannot!—indeed I cannot!"

"You will leave Katy?" Mrs. Eldridge turned her eyes with a tender look upon her little deformed girl.

No one answered; but Katy drew close to her father and leaned against him in a way that said as plainly as words could have uttered her resolution,—"Where he goes I will go."

Mrs. Angell, who had learned from Mr. Eldridge

something of Katy's true character, high purposes, and deep devotion to himself, said instantly,—

"If Katy wishes to go with her father we must not hinder her."

"We will come back for you very soon, dear mother!" Katy had turned to her mother, and now put her arms lovingly about her neck, kissing her fondly as she did so.

"And then there will be no more parting until death," said Mr. Eldridge, almost solemnly.

"None through any cause of mine, dear husband!" replied Mrs. Eldridge. "Heaven keeping me, I will be to you a true wife and to my children a true mother."

About a week from this time Mr. Eldridge visited Judge Gray at his office. Years had gone by since last his form darkened the doorway which had proved to him an entrance-gate to the "road to ruin." The judge received his old victim very frigidly; and Eldridge treated him with cold but respectful formality.

"I have a little business with you, judge," said Mr. Eldridge, after taking a proffered chair.

"I am at your service." The judge did not seem to be altogether at his ease.

"My old house, I see, is without a tenant," remarked Eldridge.

The judge nodded.

"Is it for sale?"

"No."

"I would like to get it back again, judge."

"I don't wish to sell."

Eldridge leaned close to the judge, and, fixing his eyes intently upon him, said a few words that caused the latter to start and turn slightly pale.

"You perceive, Judge Gray, that you are entirely in my power!" said the lawyer, speaking with the utmost coolness. "Craig will be arrested to-morrow unless he get wind of the pursuit; and I shall take pleasure in conducting the prosecution. Without doubt, if the evidence is as clear as we hope to obtain, conviction will follow; and in pronouncing his sentence, judge, beware of personal favor. He must have the full penalty of the law."

"Must?" said the judge, indignantly. "What right have you to indicate to me, in even the remotest manner, my official duty? The presumption is outrageous!"

"Excitement will be fruitless, Judge Gray. If that villain, too long unwhipped of justice, is brought to the bar and found guilty of the crime alleged, you must not trifle with justice in fixing the amount of penalty, unless"—and Eldridge leaned close to the judge and looked into his face with a steady glance—"you wish to share in the expiation."

"Sir! What do you mean? What outrage is this you venture upon?" The judge was strongly disturbed.

"Calmly, sir! calmly!" said the lawyer, who remained entirely self-possessed. "No outrage will be attempted or committed; nor will any be suffered on your side."

"Outrage on my side? Give me patience! Eldridge, this from you?"

"When justice is in any way subverted the public good is outraged; and I need not tell you that men in higher official stations than yours do not hesitate to commit outrages of this character almost daily. And it is getting to be pretty well understood in Arden, that you are not always over-scrupulous about administering justice with an even hand. I have heard several recent cases alluded to; and there has even been talk of impeachment."

"And do you think, Morgan Eldridge," said Judge Gray, rallying himself and speaking with an appearance of bold indignation, "that I am a man to be frightened at such a bugbear? Impeachment! I wonder if I haven't had that shaken into my face over forty times by men who had been dealt out severe but even-handed justice, or who, like you, sought to gain through me some personal advantage? But it won't do! I can be a Gibraltar if need be."

"I do not care to waste many words with you, Judge Gray," answered the lawyer, coolly. "I am here for the accomplishment of certain ends. You got possession, through this villain Craig, of nearly all my property; and I wish to get a portion of it back on the easiest possible terms."

"Do you boldly charge on me complicity with a man you term a villain?"

"I do; and, what is more, have enough proof to

convict you,—at least in the public mind. You were a false friend to me, Judge Gray, acting the basest part that one man ever acts toward another. Do not let your indignation boil over! That would only be folly. What I allege you know to be truth. With the smiling face and extended hand of a friend you lured me into the toils of an unscrupulous gambler, with whom you shared the gold he WOK from me."

Not, as the reader might infer, did Judge Gray lose all command of himself at so bold a charge and madly attempt to hurl from his presence the man who dared to make it. But he actually cowered beneath the sternly-fixed gaze of the lawyer, whom he felt suddenly towering above him.

"You make grave accusations, sir," the judge at length said, in a husky voice.

"I do," was promptly answered; "but none that I am not ready to prove by unequivocal evidence."

"What do you want?" Judge Gray looked up after sitting in deep thought for a long time. He asked the question very abruptly.

"Restitution!" was the simple, sternly-spoken answer.

"What do you mean by restitution?"

"The property of which I was robbed by the gambler Craig—or at least a portion of it—must come back into my hands."

"Preposterous!"

"No. I am claiming simple justice at your hands, and I wish you to understand in the beginning that

I will be satisfied with nothing less. In the first place, then, I want my house back again!"

"I said a little while ago that I did not wish to sell."

"No matter. *I* did not wish to sell when the house was wrested from my possession."

"I presume," said Judge Gray, "that you come prepared to dictate terms as well as the sale?" He spoke with considerable bitterness.

"I will not imitate your example when you had me in your power," replied Eldridge, with covert contempt. "I will not demand the uttermost farthing. But I have fixed the terms; and they are these:—"

"Say on!" The lawyer had paused.

"My debt was four thousand dollars. Three thousand five hundred dollars at least of that sum, borrowed at various times from you, were won from me by Craig,—not fairly, but by the gambler's cheating arts; and the larger portion of it flowed back, as I can prove, into your coffers. Well, you took from me property worth five thousand dollars to settle a mortgage of four. Now we understand each other. The terms I require are these:—the restoration of my property for half the face of the mortgage under which it was sold."

Judge Gray sat silent for some minutes. Raising his eyes at length, he said, in a low voice, subdued by force into calmness,—

"Any thing else?"

"Yes; I must have two years in which to pay the sum of two thousand dollars."

"Without security, of course?" said the judge, his lip slightly curling with an impotent sneer.

"No. You shall be secured. I will take no undue advantage. All I demand is right, and I will exact nothing more and take nothing less."

"I must have time to consider," said Judge Gray, with some evasion of manner.

"Take it. But the period must be brief. By to-morrow morning your decision must be made; and before the setting of to-morrow's sun I shall require all the papers to be executed."

Mr. Eldridge arose as he said this. Judge Gray did not move in his chair, but remained with his eyes cast upon the floor.

"You have taken me at an unfair advantage," he at length said, looking up. His voice had a choking sound, and his face was almost livid.

"No, Judge Gray. It is simply this:—the laws of retribution have operated with an unusual directness in your case. You were so eager in the work of digging pits for the feet of your neighbors that you forgot some of the arts of concealment and were seen at the bad employment. And now your way in the world has suddenly become obstructed, and it may be that no path will be left for you to walk in but that which your own hands have digged full of pitfalls. The way you will find both troublesome and dangerous. If you escape destruction, deem it a matter of thankfulness; for you are in imminent danger!"

The calm, earnest, self-possessed manner of Mr.

Eldridge, as well as his warning words, had the effect to subdue Judge Gray and break down his haughty spirit. As the lawyer turned to depart he called after him,—

"See here, Eldridge!"

The latter paused, and looked at the judge.

"It shall be as you desire about the house. There is no tenant to be dispossessed; so you can go in whenever you please."

"It is well, Judge Gray," answered Eldridge. "It is not my wish to give you any needless trouble or to act from any spirit of retaliation. But to one thing my mind is fully made up; and that is, to get back at least a portion of the property unfairly taken from me. And you know me well enough, judge, to be fully assured that I am not a man to stop at half way measures."

"Well, well, you have made your proposition, and I accept. Beyond this, however, let me warn you not to attempt any thing; for if you do, so help me Heaven! I will fight you to the last breath."

"Make no rash threats, Judge Gray; and beware how you place yourself in any position of antagonism. I am armed at every point, and you are vulnerable in a dozen places."

"Pah! I understand this sort of tactics." The judge tossed his head in affected contempt.

"Perhaps not so fully as you imagine. They are no feints of the enemy, made for purposes of intimidation and to cover a weak armament. No: nothing of the kind. Beyond this I *am* prepared to

go, and you must yield to my demand, for I shall not give up the requirement."

"As one concession has only given courage to make a new demand, so a second will but prompt the third exaction. I shall have to give battle in the end. So, as a fight seems inevitable, I had far better enter into it with strength unimpaired. The game seems to be this:—to weaken me first, and then crush me down by a sudden assault with all the forces you can rally."

"Don't jump to any hasty conclusions," said Eldridge, quietly. "I have but one more demand. When that is satisfied I shall have nothing further to say, except to repeat my warning in regard to Craig. He, if brought to conviction, must not escape with any light penalty. The law must have its course."

"I will hear you," said Judge Gray, in a dogged manner.

"Through some mismanagement or trick of his lawyer, I am not clear which, Dr. Penrose has been led into signing a paper which, if put in force, will unjustly deprive him of his property. That paper I have traced to your possession: and I furthermore learn that you hold it with a full knowledge of its real character."

"Say on." The judge evinced no surprise.

"The doctor must be put right That is all."

"Well; he can be. I suppose nobody wishes to do him wrong."

"When that document is restored, and one that

expresses his legal obligation and no more substituted, I shall have nothing further to say in his case."

The judge, after sitting for a little while in evident debate, raised his desk, and, taking therefrom a paper, handed it to the lawyer, and said,—

"Is that the document?"

Eldridge glanced over its pages, and replied, as he reached it back,—

"Yes; this is the paper to which I refer."

"Keep it, and have the substitute correctly drawn. I was not aware that it contained any oppressive features."

"All right," replied Eldridge, in a cheerful voice. "I have nothing more to demand."

And he bowed formally, and left the judge in a state of mind by no means to be envied.

CHAPTER XXXV.

HOME AGAIN.

NEVER in the whole life of Mrs. Eldridge had the hours moved with such leaden feet as during the two weeks that followed the departure of her husband and Katy for Arden. A thousand doubts and fears haunted her mind; and, had she known the whole truth in regard to her husband's fearful declension during the years of their separation, she

would have fallen into states of despair. Katy had impressed her deeply and almost strangely. There was a sphere about the child that seemed to her at times like the sphere of an angel,—gentle loving, and full of the inspiration of good purposes. The deformed body and the pale, withered face were soon obscured by the exceeding beauty of her life and character; and, when Mrs. Eldridge remembered how she had once felt and spoken about the poor child, the hot blood of shame leaped in crimson flushes to her brow.

The intercourse between Mrs. Burden and Mr. Eldridge, the once high-spirited boy who, maddened by her imperious rule, had abandoned his home and gone forth into the world at a very early age, was, after their meeting and reconciliation, of the tenderest character. Both were subdued by years of suffering; and life's painful experiences had softened their hearts into forgiveness.

At the promised day Mr. Eldridge and Katy returned, both so smiling and cheerful that their presence fell like golden sunshine upon the spirits of those who had so fondly looked for their coming. A little while only did they remain with the good Mrs. Angell, and then went back to Arden, taking with them the long-lost wife and mother.

"God bless you and keep you from evil, my children!" said Mrs. Angell, fervently, as she clasped their hands in parting. "Only one thing will I ask of you, and that is the boon of a yearly visit. You must come, Morgan and Harriet and Katy,—all.

A little while, and I shall pass from my labors, and go up, I trust, to higher fields of usefulness; but while I remain here it will gladden my eyes to see you sometimes. Say that you will come."

"Our 'yes' is spoken with no truant hesitation," was earnestly said by Mr. Eldridge. "I *must* return here, and often." And he looked tenderly upon his tearful stepmother, who stood silent and sorrowful amid the group. "Years are too distant intervals."

"You cannot permit us to look upon your dear faces too often," replied Mrs. Angell. "Our hearts will anticipate the coming time with quickened pulses. God bless you all!"

And so they parted.

It was on the second day after leaving Bloomfield that the stage drove into Arden. Mrs. Eldridge had asked no questions about her future home, though thought was reaching forward and her heart trembling with vague anticipations.

She sat by the window of the coach, veiled. As each familiar object met her eyes the weight upon her feelings grew heavier, the pressure increasing almost to suffocation.

As they passed the house of Mrs. Glendy she noticed that it was closed, and that all around it were evidences of neglect, as if it had not for some time been occupied. Still the stage rolled on. Where would it stop? Ah, if the suspense were over! Nearer and nearer it came to the old home where so many happy and unhappy years were spent,—the house back to which her heart had so

often turned sighing in its dreary exile! She held her breath as the stage neared the spot. Suddenly the driver reined up his horses, and the stage stopped at the very door of all others in Arden she most desired to enter; and in a few moments two tout boys, with scarcely-recognised faces, were clasping her neck with their arms and sobbing out the name of "Mother!"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

CONCLUSION.

"Is that Mr. Weakly?" said Mrs. Eldridge, speaking to Mrs. Lamb, whom she found in charge of the household, and who, it was mutually understood, was to have with them a permanent home. They were sitting near one of the windows above on the morning after the return of Mrs. Eldridge. "Why, he looks ten years older than when I last saw him!"

"Yes, that is Mr. Weakly, poor man! He's running down sadly."

"What of his wife?"

"Ah, she's deeply to blame." And Mrs. Lamb shook her head. "In Weakly you see what evil a foolish woman can do. A kinder, more indulgent husband than he has been is not to be found in Arden. The fact is, he let his wife have her own way a great deal too much. She was a gossip and

gad-about, and did not make his home as pleasant for him as it should have been. So he sought pleasure away from home, and, very naturally, got into dangerous company. Instead of holding him to her side by the sweet attractions and loving-kindnesses that a true wife should ever extend toward her husband, she was cold, indifferent, and sometimes captious and exacting. He was naturally averse to contention, and so, in all little differences that arose between them, gave way. At last Mr. Weakly, seeing that his wife indulged a too great intimacy with Mrs. Glendy,—a woman of whose real character he had the best means of forming an estimate,—requested her to discontinue her visits and never in future to admit that personage into their house. To this the lady demurred. Mr. Weakly was in earnest; for the reputation of his wife was at stake. He forbade her ever again entering the house of Mrs. Glendy. In an hour afterward she went there again, and with the full knowledge that the eyes of her husband were upon her. Can you wonder at his being indignant? When he met her in the evening it is said that high words passed between them, and that she made all kinds of wild threats of what she would do, declaring, among other things, that she would leave him. But matters did not proceed so far. A permanent estrangement, however, was the consequence; and Mr. Weakly spent the greater part of his time away from home. To show her independence, his wife continued her visits at Mrs. Glendy's, to the serious

damage of her reputation. At last some things occurred which had the effect to open her eyes, and she saw herself in no enviable position. Since then no respectable lady in Arden has visited her; and she leads a life of hermit-like seclusion. As for her husband, he is speeding rapidly on the downward way. Pride, hope, and ambition, seem to have left him. Ah me! It is sad to think of the ruin his wife has dragged down upon both of their heads."

"And what of Mrs. Glendy?" asked Mrs. Eldridge, arousing herself some time after from a deep reverie.

"She left Arden some months ago, in company with a man named Craig, whom you may remember."

"I remember him." Mrs. Eldridge spoke in a hoarse whisper.

"About three weeks ago she was found dead one morning in her room, at a small country tavern, some ten miles from here. There were marks of violence on her which led to the conclusion that a murder had been committed. A man who, from the description given of him, resembled this Craig, left her there a few days previous to the terrible event and had not been seen in the neighborhood afterward. Late in the night a traveller stopped at the tavern and took lodgings. In the morning he was gone, and no one had noted his departure. The conjecture is that this man was Craig; and the sheriff of the county, after a week's pursuit, succeeded

in arresting him, and that under circumstances strongly justifying the first suspicions."

"'The way of transgressors is hard.'" Mrs. Eldridge made only this remark, and then sat long in abstracted silence. Deeply humbled and thankful was her heart,—humbled at the blind folly of her past life, and thankful that, while wretchedness and ruin were the doom of her two false friends, the light of love was in her dwelling and all her future radiant with golden promise.

At the trial of Craig, which in due season took place in Arden, the evidence against him was so strong that a verdict of murder in the second degree was rendered; and he was sentenced to a term of nine years' imprisonment. Judge Gray received a word of warning from Mr. Eldridge before the sentence was announced, but for which the criminal would have escaped with a lighter stroke of retribution.

And here we close our record of events, only remarking that the future of Mr. Eldridge and his family realized fully the promise of the day that dawned on their night of sorrow. Other characters, in whom the reader has felt an interest, we have not brought forward very prominently, as at first designed; for in the even tenor of their lives were so few incidents to hold the attention strongly that we could not well break up the onward-moving narra-

tive with episodes which to many would have proved wearisome rather than attractive. Enough has been indicated to show the uplifting power of the loving and the true-hearted, and to prove that woman's influence in the world is all-potent for good or for evil.

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